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FORGOTTEN LYRICS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

FORGOTTEN LYRICS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY. *By* Oswald Doughty, M.A., B.Litt., *Author of "English Lyric in the Age of Reason," &c.*

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TO
THE MEMORY
OF
THOMAS SECCOMBE

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PREFACE

In the preface to a preceding volume entitled *English Lyric in the Age of Reason* I expressed the intention of producing a second volume which, in treating of the minor lyrists of the eighteenth century, should continue the earlier work. Unforeseen circumstances have since rendered the immediate fulfilment of that aim, in the form then contemplated, impossible. The following pages, however, contain a small portion of the material collected for the intended volume.

In order to make this present work independent of its predecessor, I have been obliged in one or two instances to touch upon points discussed in detail in the earlier one. With these very few and necessary exceptions, I have excluded the poets and poems mentioned in the preceding volume. In the opening chapter on *Reason* I have attempted to trace amongst the minor poets of the time that general attitude to life so characteristic of the age, which I previously tried to follow in the lives and works of the leading poets. The examples here given of the worship of *Reason* might easily be multiplied a hundred-fold; but to continue the multiplication of examples could give little pleasure to the general reader, for whom these pages are written.

As my aim in preparing this little volume is merely to suggest certain characteristics of the eighteenth century by presenting some of its minor verses for the reader's consideration, I have generally quoted in full. The work is, indeed, intended as a kind of reasoned anthology, so arranged as to emphasise some of those elements which together form the peculiar quality of eighteenth-century verse.

What those elements are will become clear, I trust, as the reader advances; but a word may be said here about the quality as a whole. The strong realism of the age has left its mark upon these minor poets, as upon the more famous writers of the time. Everywhere is a quiet enjoyment of the good things of life: of friends and books, of the delights of town and country. Whether it be in the favourite rhythms of the heroic couplet or in more lyrical measures, we find the expression of a wise, slightly cynical and disillusioned mind; a mind neither forgetful of the past nor openly fearful of the future; a mind quietly conscious of the limitations of humanity, but not scornful of them. Such is the temper of these minor poets. Their more highly strung contemporaries who surpassed them, Pope and Swift, Collins and Gray, Cowper and Chatterton, with nerves less steady than theirs, might fail to attain the equanimity of these lesser versifiers; but the minors were undisturbed. They remained glad in the gift of life, content in the small pleasures of the daily round, never yielding to the futile rebellion of the

romantic temper that chafed at the limitations of human existence. Cultivating elegance and urbanity, they calmly accept life on the terms on which it is granted to them, and refusing to dream of an impossible paradise they display only the strong resignation of the classical temper. Whatever Fate or Fortune brings them, they will

"Govern their passions with an absolute sway."

Nor perhaps are these common-sense poets so destitute of passion as they would have us believe. As the music of the eighteenth century becomes more familiar to his ears, the reader learns to detect the accents of real feeling in lines that once seemed lifeless and cold. To some, indeed, the restrained emotion so characteristic of the eighteenth century may bear a more intimate appeal than does much more obviously impassioned verse. Some, too, may prefer this poetry of average human nature, which is of the earth, to the mystical and metaphysical ecstasies of late seventeenth-century and early nineteenth-century poets, or to the passionate life of the Elizabethans.

But whatever may be our poetic idols, few will deny the pleasure which the occasional companionship of these solid, common-sense, sometimes whimsical poets of the eighteenth century brings. Their feet were firmly planted on the good earth of their native land; their heads were never more than six feet above it. They are pleasant, reliable persons, who will oblige with a few well-timed stanzas when requested. Seeing them thus, we must like them. Wings they do not desire, for they have the good sense to know that wings would only make them ridiculous and uncomfortable. To them it fell to sing of the practical and commonplace in life; it is to their credit that at times they did so with felicity and charm. And their poetry is a reflection of their lives:

"With will by no reverse unmanned,
With pulse of even tone,
They from to-day and from to-night
Expected nothing more
Than yesterday and yesternight
Had proffered them before."

In that attitude, surely, lay the deepest wisdom of the eighteenth century.

. . . . . .

It is with pleasure that I take this opportunity of thanking my friends, Mr P. Leon and Mr J. W. Jeaffreson, for kindly assisting me in the revision of the proof sheets, and for most helpful advice on various small problems which arose. O. D.

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I

REASON

"La guerre intérieure de la raison contre les passions a fait que ceux qui ont voulu avoir la paix se sont partagés en deux sectes. Les unes ont voulu renoncer aux passions, et devenir Dieux. Les autres ont voulu renoncer à la raison, et devenir bêtes. Mais ils ne l'ont pu ni les uns ni les autres; et la raison demeure toujours qui accuse la bassesse et l'injustice des passions, et trouble le repos de ceux qui s'y abandonnent: et les passions sont toujours vivantes dans ceux mêmes qui veulent y renoncer."—PASCAL.

ON Monday, 10th April 1775, Dr Johnson and Boswell, who were the dinner guests of hospitable General Oglethorpe, fell, as often, to arguing.

"Mr Scott of Amwell's *Elegies* were lying in the room. Dr Johnson observed: 'They are very well; but such as twenty people might write.' Upon this [says Boswell] I took occasion to controvert Horace's maxim:

'————————mediocribus esse poetis
Non Di, non homines, non concessere columnae': [*sic.*]

for here (I observed) was a very middle-rate poet, who pleased many readers, and therefore poetry of a middle-sort was entitled to some esteem; nor could I see why poetry should not, like everything else, have different gradations of excellence, and, consequently, of value. Johnson repeated the common remark, that 'as there is no necessity for our having poetry at all, it being merely a luxury, an instrument of pleasure, it can have no value, unless when exquisite in its kind.' I declared

myself not satisfied [Boswell adds]. 'Why, then, sir,' said he, 'Horace and you must settle it.'"

What Boswell's ultimate conclusion was, I have not sought to discover, but I trust that he finally came to agree with Johnson's excellent æsthetic principle, and that in time some of our modern Boswells may be induced to do the same. That insidious and ever-present temptation to the critic unwittingly to lower or confuse his standards of æsthetic quality when dealing with little-known persons in whom he takes a special interest, and so, unconsciously, to magnify the work he is investigating, received little encouragement from the eighteenth-century poet who wrote:

"The glow-worm scribblers of a feeble age,
Pale twinklers of an hour, provoke my rage:
In each dark hedge we start an insect fire,
Which lives by night, and must at dawn expire;
Yet such their number, that their specks combine,
And the unthinking vulgar swear they shine." [1]

Such is my apology for having no examples of high and original poetic genius smothered by public indifference and neglect, to offer to the reader who cares to study the resurrections from a century of forgetfulness which the following pages offer. I regret that I have not had the good fortune to discover poetry of the finest quality, condemned to obscurity by reason of the poetic intolerance and jealousy of past romantic generations. While for some of my quotations I can furnish the excuse given by Southey in his *Specimens of the Later English Poets*—"In a collection which is meant to give the poetic character of the age, it is as

[1] Dodsley, ed. 1782, v. 328. By Dr H * *.

necessary to exhibit the worst specimens as the best" —it must also be admitted that the best seldom reach a high level of art.

"Why then," the question inevitably arises, "do you revive these poems at all?" The answer is, that this volume merely seeks to allay the curiosity of those interested in eighteenth-century literature, by giving some account of the nature and qualities of the lyrics written by some minor eighteenth-century poets. The common belief that few lyrics were written between 1700–1800 is entirely mistaken. During those years as many lyrical (or would-be lyrical) poems were written as at any time probably before. Many of them indeed are not without skill and charm, and to have made their acquaintance is to have seen a new side of English letters, and to have gained a new insight into eighteenth-century English life. For perhaps the most interesting and useful method of examining these verses is to take them as social documents, to find in them what qualities and influences were active in the England of that epoch.

But this interest is primarily one of literary and social history, not of pure literature. It is, indeed, chiefly from this social or historical standpoint that I shall treat of these minor lyrists of "the age of reason." Nevertheless, I would repeat, that occasionally, though only occasionally, a poem will turn up of finer poetic quality which deserves æsthetic appreciation. But on the whole, after careful and protracted research, I am surprised to find how very little of artistic worth has been neglected, glad also to discover how little injustice the romantics did to the period which immediately preceded their own. It is to be hoped that the present generation will have no more cause than the

romantic age, to be ashamed of the way in which it has treated its immediate predecessor.

Despite these facts, we find the lyric verse of the minor poets of the eighteenth century, not infrequently attaining a quality (and of course a quantity) superior to that of most of the leading poets of the day. Nor is the reason of this difficult to discover. At a time when poetry became essentially of the Town, when Pope and his admirers made "wit" supreme, when "society verse" was the poetic ideal, the leading poets inevitably neglected lyric. For, as Sir Leslie Stephen says:

"One characteristic of Wit is always a fear of ridicule. Above all things he dreads making a fool of himself. The old lyric, for example, which came so spontaneously to the Elizabethan poet or dramatist, and of which echoes are still to be found in the Restoration, has decayed, or rather has been transformed. When you have written a genuine bit of love-poetry, the last place, I take it, in which you think of seeking the applause of a congenial audience would be the smoking-room of your club: but that is the nearest approach to the critical tribunal of Queen Anne's day. It is necessary to smuggle in poetry and passion in disguise, and conciliate possible laughter by stating plainly that you anticipate the ridicule yourself. In other words, you write society verses like Prior, temper sentiment by wit, and if you do not express vehement passion, turn out elegant verses, salted by an irony which is a tacit apology perhaps for some genuine feeling."

That is an admirable summary of the conditions affecting Augustan poetry at the fountain-head, London. Nor would I suggest that the minor verse of the period

is free from the ideals and influences of the Town. A great part of it, perhaps indeed the greater part, is written under the domination of the Augustan tradition; a great part attempts, but fails to achieve, the delicate wit and felicitous phrasing of Pope and Prior. But amongst the minors are others, often far from the Town and its influences, men of no high or sustained poetic power, who do occasionally, inspired only by the desire to express in simple language a genuine feeling, strike out a lyric note beyond the common range of their generation.

That this revolt should come for the most part from persons living in rustic simplicity, far from the Town and society, or if of the Town, yet not of society, is an interesting, though not surprising, fact. John Scott the Quaker, tending his garden, or wandering by the green lanes and quiet streams of Amwell in Hertfordshire, expresses the feelings of these rebels against the poetry of the Town, when he writes his:

Ode

Written after reading some modern love-verses

Take hence this tuneful trifler's lays!
I'll hear no more the unmeaning strain
Of Venus' Loves, and Cupids' darts,
And killing eyes, and wounded hearts;
All flattery's round of fulsome praise,
All falsehood's cant of fabled pain.

Bring me the Muse, whose tongue has told
Love's genuine plaintive tender tale;
Bring me the Muse, whose sounds of woe
'Midst death's dread scenes so sweetly flow,
When friendship's faithful breast lies cold,
When beauty's blooming cheek is pale:

Bring these—I like their grief sincere;
It soothes my sympathetic gloom:
For, oh! love's genuine pains I've borne,
And death's dread rage has made me mourn;
I've wept o'er friendship's early bier,
And dropped the tear on beauty's tomb.

Not exalted poetry perhaps; too self-conscious of its "sensibility," and full of *clichés*, but bearing the stamp of sincerity, and interesting as a sign of revolt. Nor shall we lightly dismiss John Scott's complaint against the poetry of his time, if we accept Southey's delightfully laconic estimate of his character: "A very amiable man, whose opinions were seldom wrong, and whose feelings always right."

Others, even in London, long before Scott, had made adverse criticisms of the poetry of the Town. Matthew Green in his poem *The Spleen*, which appeared in 1737, says of poetry:

"I only transient visits pay,
Meeting the Muses in my way,
Scarce known to the fastidious dames,
Nor skilled to call them by their names.
Nor can their passports in these days,
Your profit warrant, or your praise.
On poems by their dictates writ,
Critics as sworn appraisers, sit,
And mere upholsterers in a trice
On gems and painting set a price.
These tayl'ring artists for our lays
Invent cramped rules, and with strait stays
Striving free Nature's shape to hit,
Emaciate sense, before they fit."

In such passages of the minor poetry of the eighteenth century do we find this dissatisfaction with a

poetry which refused to express the deepest feelings of humanity in language simple and sincere.

But this repression of feeling in Augustan poetry was not solely due to the worship of "wit" and the influence of "society." I have attempted to show in a previous volume that the writers of the early eighteenth century were obsessed by the ideal of a life of "reason" —a life in which hopeless passion and futile regret should have no place, because the feelings were to be completely controlled by reason. They desired the happiness of mankind most ardently, and saw quite clearly and truly that most of the sorrow in human life sprang from the "unreason" of humanity. To desire what one could not obtain, to strive for what one could not attain, to allow passion to dominate the soul and subjugate reason, to ask of life or of humanity or of God (if He existed) more than life or humanity or God could give, was to set out upon a fool's errand which could only end in disillusion, discontent, sorrow, madness, or premature death. Seeing this, the Augustans opened their eyes and took, as they thought, the measure of life, of humanity, of God, and having carefully determined the limits of human possibility, of human happiness, decided not to destroy the limited happiness which life allowed, by desiring or struggling to obtain more than life could give. Only by adhering to reason could life be made a happy and beautiful, even if a not entirely satisfying thing.

They looked back at the Elizabethans, those men of passion and action, and as they saw how often passion and action led to tragic endings and bitter regrets, their suspicions became certainties, and for a time they

turned their backs upon both the letters and the spirit of what seemed to them a barbaric, unreasonable and chaotic age. The clear light of reason had dawned at last; men would no longer waste life's possibilities by allowing instincts and emotions to make a chaos of human life.

The theory was excellent and, within its limits, true. But was it in practice so easy to realise as it seemed to be in theory? Would the passions obey reason, and when they found themselves desiring the unobtainable withdraw meekly, leaving their possessor in philosophic calm? Would thwarted love, and untimely death, unfaithfulness and failure, leave no sting in the reasonable breast? They soon found that reason was no adequate defence against the harsher realities of life; that instinct and passion would not easily become reason's slaves, that permanent human happiness, which had seemed so near, was really as distant as ever. Even if by much exercise of will and patience the passions were expelled, they left but a negation, more intolerable in its *ennui* than the pain of thwarted desires. Nevertheless, for a time, these Stoics of the eighteenth century tried to maintain their theoretical position, and even when its inadequacy was proved to them by experience, they refused to admit failure, and its implications, in their writings.

"A soul which uncorrupted Reason sways,
With calm Indifference, Fortune's gifts surveys,"

sang Elizabeth Carter, and the sentiment was applauded and repeated on every hand.

In every department of literature, in prose and in

poetry, even from the pulpit, the conception of a dominant reason and obedient passions was emphasised.

"Now 'tis the proper business and employment of our reason and understanding, of our liberty and freedom, of our agency and self-motion; 'tis the very end and use of these noble faculties, to maintain the supremacy of the mind over all the inferior appetites and passions, to overrule all emotions, to curb every excessive desire, and to subdue every inordinate affection; in a word to govern and regulate the whole *Posse* of our passions, so as to direct them to their proper objects, and keep them within due bounds."

So writes the Rev. Benjamin Ibbott, D.D., Chaplain-in-Ordinary to his Majesty, in a sermon published in 1726. In his other sermons, and in those of his contemporaries, the same doctrine is preached, the necessity, as he remarks elsewhere, "to destroy the Empire of Sense, and establish the Empire of Reason." This ideal, one inimical to spontaneous lyric, is again and again expressed by the poets and poetasters of the day, from the greatest to the least.

Nowhere does this ideal find more clear or complete expression than in the following poem by John Pomfret, written in the first year of the eighteenth century:—

Reason

The passions still predominant will rule
Ungoverned, rude, not bred in Reason's school;
Our understanding they with darkness fill,
Cause strong corruptions, and pervert the will;
On these the soul, as on some flowing tide,
Must sit, and on the raging billows ride,

Hurried away; for how can be withstood
The impetuous torrent of the boiling blood?
Begone, false hopes, for all our learning's vain;
Can we be free, when these the rule maintain?
These are the tools of knowledge which we use;
The spirits, heated, will strange things produce;
Tell me, whoe'er the passions could control,
Or from the body disengage the soul;
Till this is done, our best pursuits are vain
To conquer truth, and unmixed knowledge gain.

The only happiness life could give, according to this principle, was a state of indifference to joy or woe, for to be susceptible to joy was to be also susceptible to pain, and pain would inevitably preponderate.

Lady Mary Chudleigh expressed this philosophy of life in—

The Resolve

I

For what the world admires I'll wish no more,
Nor court that airy nothing of a name:
Such fleeting shadows let the proud adore,
Let them be suppliants for an empty fame.

II

If Reason rules within, and keeps the throne,
While the inferior faculty obey,
And all her laws without reluctance own,
Accounting none more fit, more just than they:

III

If virtue my free soul unsullied keeps,
Exempting it from passion and from stain:
If no black guilty thoughts disturb my sleeps
And no past crimes my vext remembrance pain:

IV

If, tho' I pleasure find in living here,
I yet can look on death without surprise:
If I've a soul above the reach of fear,
And which will nothing mean or sordid praise:

V

A soul which cannot be depressed by grief,
Nor too much raised by the sublimest joy;
Which can, when troubled, give itself relief,
And to advantage all its thoughts employ:

VI

Then am I happy in my humbler state,
Altho' not crowned with glory nor with bays:
A mind that triumphs over vice and fate,
Esteems it mean to court the world for praise.

Lady Chudleigh expressed similar ideas in prose. "'Tis impossible to be happy," she writes in the preface to her *Poems* (1703), "without making reason the standard of all our thoughts, words and actions, and firmly resolving to yield a constant, ready and cheerful obedience to its dictates."

Others, too, express the same ideal.

"With passion unruffled, untainted with pride,
By reason my life let me square;
The wants of my nature are cheaply supplied,
And the rest is but folly and care,"

sings the Rev. Thomas Fitzgerald. Another clerical poet, the Rev. John Free, cries:

"O! who shall teach me to sustain,
A more than manly part,
To go through life, nor suffer pain
Nor joy to touch my heart?

Thou blest Indifference be my guide,
I court thy gentle reign;
When passion turns my steps aside,
Still call me back again."

But the best-known poem of the eighteenth century which expresses this desire for complete immunity from the joys and sorrows of human life, is Mrs Greville's

Prayer for Indifference

I ask no kind return in love,
No tempting charm to please,
Far from the heart such gifts remove,
That sighs for peace and ease!

Nor ease, nor peace, that heart can know,
That, like the needle true,
Turns at the touch of joy or woe,
But, turning, trembles too.

Far as distress the soul can wound,
'Tis pain in each degree:
'Tis bliss but to a certain bound—
Beyond—is agony.

Then take this treacherous sense of mine,
Which dooms me still to smart;
Which pleasure can to pain refine;
To pain, new pangs impart.

O! haste to shed the sovereign balm,
My shattered nerves new-string;
And for my guest, serenely calm,
The nymph Indifference bring!

At her approach, see Hope, see Fear,
See Expectation fly!
And Disappointment in the rear,
That blasts the purpos'd joy.

The tears which pity taught to flow,
My eyes shall then disown;
The heart that throbbed at other's woe,
Shall then scarce feel its own.

The wounds which now each moment bleed,
Each moment then shall close;
And tranquil days shall still succeed
To nights of sweet repose.

. . . . . .

And what of life remains for me,
I'll pass in sober ease;
Half-pleased, contented I will be,
Content—but half to please.

But by the time this poem appeared, in 1762, the opposing spirit of a full acceptance of life's pains and pleasures, which was to inspire much romantic poetry, had arisen in revolt, and Mrs Greville's challenge was immediately accepted by it. The best known of the replies which this poem to Indifference provoked, is Cowper's, written in this same year, 1762:

"And dwells there in a female heart,
By bounteous heaven designed
The choicest raptures to impart,
To feel the most refined—

Dwells there a wish in such a breast
  Its nature to forego,
To smother in ignoble rest
  At once both bliss and woe?

Far be the thought, and far the strain,
  Which breathes the low desire,
How sweet soe'er the verse complain,
  Tho' Phœbus string the lyre.

Come then, fair maid (in nature wise),
  Who, knowing them, can tell
From generous sympathy what joys
  The glowing bosom swell.

. . . . . .

Oh! if my Sovereign Author please,
  Far be it from my fate,
To live, unblest in torpid ease,
  And slumber on in state;

Each tender tie of life defied,
  Whence social pleasures spring,
Unmoved with all the world beside,
  A solitary thing.—

Some Alpine mountain wrapt in snow,
  Thus braves the whirling blast,
Eternal winter doomed to know,
  No genial spring to taste.

. . . . . .

What though, in scaly armour drest,
  Indifference may repel
The shafts of woe—in such a breast
  No joy can ever dwell.

'Tis woven in the world's great plan,
And fixed by heaven's decree,
That all the true delights of man
Should spring from Sympathy.

. . . . . .

Let no low thought suggest the prayer,
Oh grant, kind heaven, to me,
Long as I draw ethereal air,
Sweet Sensibility.

. . . . . .

And suns to come, as round they wheel,
Your golden moments bless,
With all a tender heart can feel,
Or lively fancy guess."

Nor was Cowper alone in his protest. In *The Fairy's Answer to Mrs Greville*, Isabella Howard, Countess of Carlisle, tells how the night before, an adventure befell her in a moonlit wood:

" Enwrapt in solemn thoughts, I sate,
Revolving o'er the turns of fate,
Yet void of hope, or fear;
When lo! behold an aëry throng,
With lightest steps, and jocund song,
Surpris'd my eye and ear.

A form superior to the rest,
His little voice to me addrest,
And gently thus began,
' I've heard strange things from one of you,
Pray tell me if you think 'tis true,
Explain it if you can.

'Such incense has perfum'd my throne!
Such eloquence my heart has won!
I think I guess the hand;
I know her wit and beauty too,
But why she sends a prayer so new,
I cannot understand.

'To light some flames, and some revive,
To keep some others just alive,
Full oft I am implor'd;
But, with peculiar power to please,
To supplicate for nought but ease—
'Tis odd, upon my word!

'Tell her, with fruitless care I've sought,
And though my realms, with wonders fraught,
In remedies abound,
No grain of cold Indifference
Was ever yet allied to Sense
In all my fairy round.'"

Occasionally, but seldom, we find a poet like Robert Nugent (Earl Nugent) trying to make the best of both worlds:

"Happy when Reason deigns to guide,
Secure within the Golden Mean,
Who shuns the Stoic's senseless pride,
Nor wallows with the herd obscene.

He, nor with brow severely bent,
Chides Pleasure's smiling train away,
Nor careless of Life's great Intent,
With Folly wastes each heedless day."

Everywhere in the poetry of the earlier eighteenth century, we find this desire for indifference seeking

expression; everywhere in the later part of the century, we find a growing opposition to the Augustan ideal, a new desire for fullness of life.

"Oh Pleasure, come!—and far, far hence
Expel that nun Indifference!—
Where'er she waves her ebon wand,
Drenched in the dull Lethæan deep,
Behold the marble passions stand
Absorb'd in everlasting sleep!
Then from the waste, and barren mind
The Muse's fairy phantoms fly,
They fly, nor leave a wreck behind
Of heaven-descended poesy:
Love's thrilling tumults then are felt no more,
Quenched is the generous heat, the rapturous throbs
are o'er!"

—so sings James Scott, moved to lyric ecstasy.

John Byrom, doctor, shorthand enthusiast and poet, again and again opposed this worship of reason, in his verses. In *Thoughts upon Human Reason* he provides an antidote to the previously quoted *Reason* of Pomfret:

"Sense to discern, and reason to compare,
Are gifts that merit our improving care,
But want an inward light, when all is done,
As seeds and plants do that of outward sun:
Main help rejected, tasteless fruits arise;
And wisdom grows insipid in the wise.

Though all these Reason-worshippers profess
To guard against fanatical excess;
Enthusiastic heat, their favourite theme,
Draws their attention to the cold extreme;
Their fears of torrid fervour freeze a soul;
To shun the Zone, they send it to the Pole."

One final example of this new spirit of acceptance of feeling with its attendant joys and sorrows, and escape from reason, I will give, before quitting the subject. William Whitehead, once Poet Laureate, expressed the new attitude to life in

The Enthusiast: An Ode

Once, I remember well the day,
'Twas ere the blooming sweets of May
  Had lost their freshest hues,
When every flower on every hill,
In every vale had drunk its fill
  Of sunshine and of dews.

. . . . . .

'Twas then, beside a green-wood shade,
Which clothed a lawn's aspiring head,
  I urged my devious way,
With loitering steps regardless where,
So soft, so genial was the air,
  So wondrous bright the day.

. . . . . .

" These, these are joys alone," I cry;
" 'Tis here, divine Philosophy,
  Thou deign'st to fix thy throne!
Here Contemplation points the road
Through Nature's charms to Nature's God!
  These, these are joys alone!

" Adieu, ye vain low-thoughted cares,
Ye human hopes, and human fears,
  Ye pleasures and ye pains!"
While thus I spake, o'er all my soul
A philosophic calmness stole,
  A stoic stillness reigns.

The tyrant passions all subside;
Fear, anger, pity, shame, and pride,
No more my bosom move;
Yet still I feel, or seem to feel,
A kind of visionary zeal
Of universal love.

When lo! a voice, a voice I hear!
'Twas Reason whispered in my ear
These monitory strains:
"What mean'st thou, man? would'st thou unbind
The ties which constitute thy kind,
The pleasures and the pains?

"The same Almighty Power unseen
Who spreads the gay or solemn scene
To Contemplation's eye,
Fix'd every movement of the soul,
Taught every wish its destined goal,
And quickened every joy.

"He bids the tyrant passions rage,
He bids them war eternal wage,
And combat each his foe:
Till from dissensions concord rise,
And beauties from deformities,
And happiness from woe.

"Art thou not man, and dar'st thou find
A bliss which leans not to mankind?
Presumptuous thought and vain!
Each bliss unshared is unenjoyed,
Each power is weak unless employed
Some social good to gain.

. . . . . .

" Enthusiast, go, unstring thy lyre,
In vain thou sing'st, if none admire,
How sweet soe'er the strain.
And is not thy o'erflowing mind,
Unless thou mixest with thy kind,
Benevolent in vain?

" Enthusiast, go, try every sense,
If not thy bliss, thy excellence,
Thou yet hast learnt to scan;
At least thy wants, thy weakness know,
And see them all uniting show,
That man was made for man."

So *Reason* has changed its very nature, and the advice of reason changes in accord!

Whitehead is no poet of inspiration or imaginative power. Nevertheless his verses reveal the change of spirit which left its mark upon eighteenth-century literature and did so much between 1700 and 1800 to change English poetry.

Those verses, too, clearly show the apparent paradox of the century—that in the Augustan age when the poet lived, a social being amongst his fellows, meeting them daily in coffee-house, salon, theatre and ballroom, he wished most earnestly to retain his own emotional independence, to lock up his deepest feelings in his own breast, while at the close of the century, the poet fleeing from humanity to solitary communion with nature, sings continually of his love for man.

Pope, living amongst his fellow-wits, studied human nature at close quarters, as revealed in the polished society of the Town, in an age of " elegance " that to us of to-day seems often artificial and insincere, and left us his ultimate impression of men :

"True, some are open, and to all men known;
Others so very close, they're hid from none;
But these plain characters we rarely find;
Though strong the bent, yet quick the turns of mind:
Or puzzling contraries confound the whole;
Or affectations quite reverse the soul.
The dull flat falsehood serves for policy;
And in the cunning, truth itself's a lie:
Unthought of frailties cheat us in the wise;
The fool lies hid in inconsistencies.
See the same man, in vigour, in the gout;
Alone, in company, in place, or out;
Early at business, and at hazard late;
Mad at a fox-chase, wise at a debate;
Drunk at a borough, civil at a ball;
Friendly at Hackney, faithless at Whitehall."

Wordsworth, remote from average humanity in mind and in place, hearing only from a distance its "still sad music," meeting it only occasionally in the persons of simple rustics about him (and of even these, he had no intimate personal knowledge), and transfiguring it by the light of imagination, gives us a different picture. In his highest poetic moods he sees only the wonder of human love, of human endurance, of the human mind, for in him, as in all true romantics, the "unconquerable hope" could never die. But when for a time Wordsworth found himself in the environment of Pope, in London, he came near to despair.

"On the roof,
Of an itinerant vehicle I sate,
With vulgar men about me, trivial forms
Of houses, pavements, streets, of men and things,
Mean shapes on every side."

It is true that even here his faith, supported by memories of fairer scenes and by imaginative insight, did not die. Soon he escaped from man to nature, back to the fields and woods, hills and lakes that were nearest to his heart. With escape came a revival of hope and of that romantic poetry which is the literature of escape—escape from a sordid reality into imagination—imagination which the romantic believed to be ultimate truth. Thus it is that looking back from the tranquillity of later years, upon his experiences in London, the poet sings:

"The effect was, still more elevated views
Of human nature. Neither vice nor guilt,
Debasement undergone by body or mind,
Nor all the misery forced upon my sight,
Misery not lightly passed by, sometimes scanned
Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust
In what we *may* become; induced belief
That I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,
A solitary, who with vain conceits
Had been inspired, and walked about in dreams."

There, between Pope and Wordsworth, lies the conflict of the "classical" poets of the eighteenth century with the romantics who followed. "Reason" the reality on the one side, "imagination" the reality on the other; common sense or dreams? Did "reason" see the reality of man or only the superficial appearance of man? Did imagination discover the reality in man, piercing below false appearances, or did it create only dreams? Or did both reason and imagination discover conflicting, often indeed alternating, realities of human nature? Did the eighteenth-century poet study the

actual and superficial, and the romantic the ideal and elemental in the human soul?

I spoke of the paradox of the eighteenth century. Perhaps the cynic would dispute the fitness of the term, saying that to him there is no paradox. He might proceed to point out that to the shrewd Augustan "the proper study of mankind was Man," while to the visionary Romantic the proper study of mankind was Imagination; and so, arguing with a smile of superior wisdom, that the Augustan knew his subject while the Romantic did not, seek to prove that the Augustan conception of humanity was based upon detailed observation and intimate knowledge, while the Romantic's homage to humanity in the abstract was but an apology for shunning it in the concrete, or homage to a conception of mankind drawn chiefly from the poet's own self. But I shall not argue with the cynic.

No matter in which camp truth dwells, there are the two opposed conceptions of human nature which lie at the heart of the opposed types of poetry, the eighteenth century and the early nineteenth. And perhaps here we may find a link between the social pressure, the tribunal of the smoking-room, as Sir Leslie Stephen represented it, and this struggle between a "reasonable" and an imaginative conception of human nature and human life.

The poet generally, especially the poet of a predominantly social age, writes for others besides himself, seeks to be understood by others, and so shapes his work to their comprehension. Those who, studying mankind in Town, in social life, in the less sincere or less exalted moods of every day, came to agree with Pope's estimate of humanity, wrote naturally, for such

a humanity as Pope described. Whatever was different in themselves would, if expressed, only cause misunderstanding or laughter, and so poetry naturally found its lowest common spiritual level.

But beyond the sway of social fashions and fears was one supreme poet in the eighteenth century who grappled with this problem of happiness, passion and reason in human life, and fearing neither laughter nor misunderstanding, expressed his own conception of the truth, raising indeed the whole question into a higher region :

> " Joy and woe are woven fine,
> A clothing for the soul divine ;
> Under every grief and pine
> Runs a joy with silken twine.
> It is right it should be so ;
> Man was made for joy and woe ;
> And when this we rightly know,
> Through the world we safely go."

The eighteenth century desired " safety." In these lines Blake, with unintentional irony yet simple truth, showed them how to attain it.

II

LOVE

"Fancy does so well maintain it,
Weaker Reason can't restrain it,
But is forced to fly before it,
Or else worship and adore it."

HENRY BAKER.

To say that human love has been the inspiration of the greater and the finer part of English Lyric, is merely to repeat a commonplace. Of love the Elizabethans had sung with "full-throated ease," while the Restoration gallants at their best, as in Rochester and Sedley, preserved much of that spontaneity, and felicity of expression, which had been apparently the birthright of the Elizabethans. They of the Restoration seldom sustain the high note of lyric throughout a poem, but they can at least for a moment strike a note that moves the reader. Rochester, well acquainted with whatever of madness or folly passion may inspire, can write in a momentary desire for constancy:

"When, wearied with a world of woe,
To thy safe bosom I retire,
Where love, and peace, and honour glow,
May I, contented, there expire.

Lest once more wandering from that heaven,
I fall on some base heart unblessed,
Faithless to thee, false, unforgiven,
And lose my everlasting rest."

While for Sedley

"Love still has something of the sea."

The lingering cadence and dying fall of seventeenth-century lyric, however, scarcely penetrates the barrier of the centuries. Only occasionally do we find it, and then in the work of men who had lived in the earlier period.

Lord Lansdowne strikes out a chance note of the earlier music when he sings:

"Thoughtful nights, and restless waking,
O, the pains that we endure!
Broken faith, unkind forsaking,
Ever doubting, never sure.

Hopes deceiving, vain endeavours,
What a race has Love to run!
False protesting, fleeting favours,
Every, every way undone.

Still complaining, and defending,
Both to love, yet not agree;
Fears tormenting, passion rending,
O, the pangs of jealousy.

From such painful ways of living,
Ah! how sweet could Love be free!
Still presenting, still receiving,
Fierce, immortal ecstasy."

Charles Mordaunt, Earl of Peterborough, can begin,

"I said to my heart, between sleeping and waking,"

but after that opening line we lose all trace of the lyric note of the seventeenth century in the remainder of

the poem, which concludes with a stanza completely representative of the early eighteenth century in which it was written:

"O, wonderful creature! a woman of reason!
Never grave out of pride; never gay out of season!
When so easy to guess who this angel should be,
Would one think Mrs Howard ne'er dreamt it was she?"

How lame the ending, after such a lyrical first line! Reason, we see, has again made its appearance, even in this matter of love. Pomfret, he who had in 1700 written his poem *Reason* so expressive of the ideals of his age, also wrote a poem *Love and Reason*:

"Reason's the rightful empress of the soul,
Does all exorbitant desires control,
Checks every wild excursion of the mind,
By her wise dictates happily confined;
And he that will not her commands obey,
Leaves a safe convoy in a dangerous sea."

It may all be very true and wise, but it makes disappointing love poetry to the reader whose ears still hold the music of Rochester, Sedley, or that of their predecessors. It is reason in woman, not beauty or passion, which leads these worshippers to love song. Nevertheless, or its kind, Pope's little lyric is exquisite:

"I know the thing that's most uncommon;
(Envy, be silent, and attend!)
I know a reasonable woman,
Handsome and witty, yet a friend.

Not warped by passion, awed by rumour,
Not grave through pride, or gay through folly,
An equal mixture of good humour,
And sensible soft melancholy.

'Has she no faults then (Envy says), Sir?'
Yes, she has one, I must aver;
When all the world conspires to praise her,
The woman's deaf, and does not hear."

Surely that delightful sketch by Pope (it is a sketch of the Mrs Howard of whom Peterborough sang) is better than many more pretentious lyrics, giving us a glimpse of a charming character.

As a whole, the love poems of the age are light society verses, treating love in a flippant and insincere manner, except when they deprecate it as opposed to reason. William Walsh gives us good examples of both these kinds:

"Love is a medley of endearments, jars,
Suspicions, quarrels, reconcilements, wars;
Then peace again. Oh! would it not be best
To chase the fatal poison from our breast?
But since so few can live from passion free,
Happy the man, and only happy he,
Who with such lucky stars begins his love,
That his cool judgment does his choice approve.
Ill-grounded passions quickly wear away;
What's built upon esteem can ne'er decay."

At another time he writes as a wit, flippantly and cleverly, as in

The Despairing Lover

Distracted with care
For Phyllis the fair,
Since nothing could move her,
Poor Damon her lover
Resolves in despair

No longer to languish,
Nor bear so much anguish:
But, mad with his love,
To a precipice goes;
Where a leap from above
Would soon finish his woes.

When in rage he came there,
Beholding how steep
The sides did appear,
And the bottom how deep;
His torments projecting,
And sadly reflecting,
That a lover forsaken
A new love may get;
But a neck, when once broken,
Can never be set:
And that he could die
Whenever he would;
But that he could live
But as long as he could:
How grievous soever
The torment might grow,
He scorned to endeavour
To finish it so.
But bold, unconcerned
At the thoughts of the pain,
He calmly returned
To his cottage again.

Here, too, a most "reasonable" lover! But all were not so:

"Seek not to know my passion's spring,
The reason to discover:
For reason is a useless thing,
When we've commenced the lover.

Should lovers quarrel with their fate,
And ask the reason why
They are concerned to dote on that,
Or for this object die?

They must not hope for a reply,
And this is all they know:
They sigh, and weep, and rave, and die,
Because it must be so." [1]

Another sings:

"No longer preach, ye aged sires,
The power of reason over love;
Nor blame in youth those tender fires
Your years deny you now to prove.

Love is a fever of the mind
By nature we must all expect:
A frenzy of so fond a kind
Enjoyment only can correct.

'But reason checks its heat,' you'll cry.
See! see! in Cloe's sparkling eyes
Reason her standard waves on high,
Her cogent rhetoric there employs.

Could Plato and the Stagirite
More bulky volumes still compile,
Experience shows—howe'er they write—
The scale must turn at Cloe's smile.

Urge on then your philosophy;
This maxim all at length must own:
The way to conquer—is to fly;
The wretch who parleys is undone." [2]

[1] Mary Masters. [2] Richard Lely.

An anonymous writer cries:

" Before she betrayed me with art,
Her beauty was lost to my eyes;
But since she's entangled my heart,
She seizes my Reason as prize."

John Bancks, another minor poet of the early eighteenth century, gives us a picture of the conflict between love and reason, which is typical of his time. Of love he says:

" Thou fly'st: Reason with wonted grace
Kindly returns; resumes her place;
Nor fears the fury of that potent face.

Passion subsides. Her gentler sway
Flows on my soul, and smooths her way,
Serene and calm like the still breeze in May."

But another attack is made by the enemy upon reason, and so:

" Traitor to Reason, as before,
To aught but Love I live no more."

Charles Dibdin presents the conflict, not in the terms of abstract thought, but in the actual life of a woman:

Love and Reason

A woman grown, with sparkling eyes,
High health and easy carriage,
Doll felt her anxious bosom rise,
Whilst something whispered marriage;
But, ere she leaped, took, to her praise,
This maxim from her mother:
" Ne'er wed, dear girl, while reason says
One thing, and love another."

This golden rule to guard her heart,
  She went to see her cousins,
Where many a fop came round so smart,
  Till Doll had counted dozens;
But still the more the tim'rous maid
  Was teased with all this pother:
She found grave reason one thing said,
  And sprightly love another.

"I've loved you long," cried out a smart;
  For weeks and months I've watched you—
You and you only have my heart":
  Cried Doll, "I've fairly catched you;
I've left, good Sir, but three short days,
  My native place and mother,
Who truly told that reason says
  One thing, and love another.

"In this short time I've looked around;
  Those things I fancied real,
On close inspection I have found
  Illusive and ideal;
I've heard false vows, I've seen mean pride,
  I've known vice, virtue smother,
Wise reason taking still one side,
  And silly love another.

"This having seen, I'll hie me home,
  By prudence now grown wiser,
And while I vow no more to roam,
  Hoard wisdom like a miser;
Wed honest Ned who loves me well,
  With glad consent of mother;
So shall no longer reason tell
  One tale, and love another."

There is a pleasant, half-humorous, half-sentimental picture of that sensible, commonplace temperament

wisely choosing its happiness without extravagant hopes or uncontrolled passions, which so frequently finds expression in eighteenth-century verse.

Many other poets of the age deal with this struggle between reason and love, but to continue quotations would merely be to repeat what has already been said. J. G. Cooper, famous or infamous for his bad verses, sings, in *Love and Reason*, of reason advising against the passion of love. Then reason speaks, and urges that in this case it is god-like to love so exceptional a woman, so bringing love and reason into harmony.

One other advocate of love's supremacy over reason I will quote before leaving the subject. He is one Anthony Whistler, who contributed the following verses to Dodsley's *Collection* :—

"Let wisdom boast her mighty power,
With passion still at strife,
Yet love is sure the sovereign flower,
The sweet perfume of life;

The happy breeze that swells the sail
When quite becalmed we lie;
The drop that will the heart regale,
And sparkle in the eye;

The sun that wakes us to delight,
And drives the shades away;
The dream that cheers our dreary night,
And makes a brighter day.

But if, alas! it wrongly seize,
The case is twice as bad;
This flower, sun, drop, or dream, or breeze,
Will drive a blockhead mad."

" Now that you are going to marry," said Johnson to Boswell one November day in 1769, " do not expect more from life than life will afford." In that advice, Johnson was not only expressing the general attitude to life in his age, but also the burden of many " love lyrics " of that period. In love and marriage, as in every other department of life, these men of wisdom were cautious in action, and restrained in their desires.

" Say, Love, for what good end designed,
Wert thou to mortals given?
Was it to fix on earth the mind?
Or raise the heart to heaven?

Deluded oft we still pursue
The fleeting bliss we sought,
As children chase the bird in view,
That's never to be caught.

Oh! who shall teach me to sustain
A more than manly part?
To go through life, nor suffer pain
Nor joy to touch my heart.

Thou blest Indifference, be my guide,
I court thy gentle reign;
When passion turns my steps aside,
Still call me back again.

Teach me to see through beauty's art,
How oft its trappings hide
A base, a lewd, a treacherous heart;
With thousand ills beside.

Nor let my generous soul give way,
Too much to serve my friends;
Let reason still control their sway,
And show where duty ends.

If to my lot a wife should fall,
May friendship be our love;
The passion that is transport all,
Does seldom lasting prove.

If lasting, 'tis too great for peace,
The pleasure's so profuse;
The heart can never be at ease,
Which has too much to lose.

Calm let me estimate this life,
Which I must leave behind,
Nor let fond passion raise a strife,
To discompose my mind.

When nature calls, may I steal by,
As rising from a feast;
I've had my fill of life, and why
Should I disturb the rest."[1]

But even in the eighteenth century love would occasionally conquer reason, and when disappointment came, verses expressing the sorrow of hopeless love would be written, as in all ages:

"In vain do friends and wine remove
What I again must worse endure,
Relapsing still into a love
Which reason blames, but cannot cure.

Reason might once relief have brought;
But nursed the pleasing infant pain;
And now by late experience taught,
Resists the bitter growth in vain.

What though I shun to see her eyes?
I feel them at my aching heart:
The wounded deer the huntsman flies;
But can he from himself depart?"[2]

[1] Rev. John Free. [2] George Jeffreys.

Sir John Henry Moore has left us a charming little song of grief, self-conscious but restrained :

L'Amour Timide

If in that breast so good, so pure,
Compassion ever loved to dwell ;
Pity the sorrows I endure !
The cause I must not, dare not, tell !

The grief that on my quiet preys,
That rends my heart, that checks my tongue,
I fear will last me all my days ;
But feel it will not last me long.

Another song, by George Jeffreys, on this subject is worthy of quotation :

" Loud was the wind and rough the main ;
But life was past my care :
I thought of absence and disdain ;
And felt no storm, but there.

The seas their wonders might reveal ;
But Chloe's eyes have more :
Nor all the treasure they conceal,
Can equal mine on shore.

From native Britain's temperate coast
Remove me farther yet,
To shiver in eternal frost,
Or melt with India's heat ;

Her image shall my days beguile,
And still my dream shall be,
The tuneful voice, and tender smile,
Though ne'er vouchsafed to me."

Nor is the only woe sung by these eighteenth-century troubadours, the ultimate sorrow of complete rejection. The minor, transient griefs of passion also find a voice. Delia is absent, and the Rev. Richard Jago sings:

"With leaden foot Time creeps along
While Delia is away;
With her, nor plaintive was the song,
Nor tedious was the day.

Ah! envious power! reverse my doom;
Now double thy career,
Strain every nerve, stretch every plume,
And rest them when she's here."

This poem too is a delightful example of that toning down of the "metaphysical" conceits of the seventeenth century into eighteenth-century wit. For there are eighteenth-century gallants who would write lightly and wittily of love as did the seventeenth-century courtiers before them. They too are men of reason, but their reason is expressed in flippant gaiety or cynicism, not in the grand and deep philosophical manner. Hence we have plenty of light, gay and insincere love verses. These men, whatever their lips may say, are well able to take care of themselves. Their hearts burn ceaselessly for one or another of the "cruel fair," but they will never be burned up. Everywhere the desire to be witty is much more obvious than the torment of which they sing.

"As Chloe ply'd her needle's art,
A purple drop the spear
Made from her heedless finger start,
And from her eyes a tear.

Ah! might but Chloe by her smart
Be taught for mine to feel;
Mine caused by Cupid's piercing dart,
More sharp than pointed steel!

Then I her needle would adore,
Love's arrow it should be,
Indued with such a subtle power
To reach her heart for me."[1]

Everywhere we find this light, gay, often cynical and insincere love verse of darts, flames and cupids. For this kind of versifier, love is not so much a natural passion as a game played between the sexes, in which sincerity would be fatal.

"Ye fair that would victorious prove,
Seem but half kind, when most you love;
Damon pursues if Cælia flies,
But when her love is born, his dies."[2]

So throughout the century, generally amidst the conventional pastoral setting, the lovers' battalions advance, skirmish and retreat in inconclusive warfare, which, pleasant as it seems to have been for them, soon bores the modern reader.

The pastoral convention is most popular. Damon, Cælia, Phyllis, all the shepherds and shepherdesses known to antiquity, with many more recent acquisitions, sport amongst groves and fountains. Cælia or Phyllis is generally found sleeping, and the obliging wind

[1] By "Mr Ellis"—the "Jack Ellis" of Johnson's remark: "The most literary conversation that I ever enjoyed was at the table of Jack Ellis, the money-scrivener behind the Royal Exchange, with whom I at one period used to dine generally once a week."—Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ed. G. B. Hill, iii. 21.

[2] Broome, *The Coy*.

having conveniently disarranged her garments, Damon's gentle longing suddenly becomes tumultuous passion. As a rule Damon is a sufficiently skilful lover to achieve success, although occasionally, but very occasionally, his clumsiness and diffidence meet with well-deserved failure. Sometimes too, to the rage and chagrin of Cælia, Damon's morals or modesty lead him to thwart her good intentions towards himself. For these shepherdesses of eighteenth-century England are by no means models of feminine propriety. Much of the typical attitude of the Restoration period to women lingered through the eighteenth century.

" A woman and a crab are made
Perverse alike, and retrograde:
The head in either you may spare
But all the rest is dainty fare."

George Jeffreys enjoys translating such sentiments from the cynical French. He (the disappointed man) will make wicked epigrams about the ladies' morals:

" Tempt but the fair with pieces ten;
If naughty, she'll consent t'ye;
But is she chaste? Excuse her then,
She yields not under twenty."

Nor can it be doubted that if the men were very wicked, many of the ladies were very naughty. Setting traps, they could hardly complain if they were themselves caught. One poet gives good advice *To a Lady very handsome but too fond of Dress*:

" Prythee why so fantastic and vain?
What charms can the toilet supply?
Why so studious, admirers to gain?
Need beauty lay traps for the eye?

Because that thy breast is so fair,
Must thy tucker be still setting right?
And canst thou not laughing forbear,
Because that thy teeth are so white?"[1]

But we know that there were women who cultivated beauty of mind as well as that of body, and Jabez Earle,[2] a Presbyterian minister, gives us the contrast in a poem well known in its day but now forgotten:

"Stella and Flavia every hour
Do various hearts surprise:
In Stella's soul lies all her power;
And Flavia's in her eyes.

More boundless Flavia's conquests are,
And Stella's more confined;
All can discern a face that's fair,
But few a lovely mind.

Stella, like Britain's monarchs, reigns
O'er cultivated lands;
Like eastern tyrants Flavia deigns
To rule o'er barren sands.

Then boast not, Flavia, thy fair face,
Thy beauty's only store;
Thy charms will every day decrease,
Each day gives Stella more."

The poetic celebration of woman's inconstancy was as common in the eighteenth century as at any other period:

[1] Anon.

[2] The claims of Mrs Barber and Mrs Pilkington to the authorship of this disputed poem have been rejected by the latest investigator, who decides in favour of Dodsley's attribution of the poem to Jabez Earle. See *London Mercury*, March 1922, p. 519.

"Woman! thoughtless, giddy creature!
Laughing, idle, fluttering thing!
Most fantastic work of Nature!
Still, like Fancy, on the wing!

Slave to every changing passion;
Loving, hating, in extreme;
Fond of every foolish fashion;
And at best, a pleasing dream!

Lovely trifle! Dear illusion!
Conquering weakness! Wished-for pain!
Man's chief glory and confusion!
Of all vanity most vain!

Thus deriding Beauty's power,
Bevil called it all a cheat;
But in less than half-an-hour,
Kneeled and whined at Celia's feet." [1]

Smollett gives us a similar conception of woman:

"To fix her—'twere a task as vain
To count the April drops of rain,
To sow in Afric's barren soil,
Or tempests hold within a toil.

I know it, friend; she's light as air,
False as the fowler's artful snare,
Inconstant as the passing wind,
As winter's dreary frost unkind.

She's such a miser too in love,
Its joys she'll neither share nor prove;
Though hundreds of gallants await
From her victorious eyes their fate.

[1] Henry Baker.

Blushing at such inglorious reign,
I sometimes strive to break her chain;
My reason summon to my aid,
Resolved no more to be betrayed.

Ah! friend! 'tis but a short-lived trance,
Dispelled by one enchanting glance;
She need but look, and, I confess,
Those looks completely curse, or bless.

So soft, so elegant, so fair,
Sure something more than human's there;
I must submit, for strife is vain:
'Twas destiny that forged the chain."

Then too, there are the cold and cruel charmers, who lay men low:

" What charms has Chloe!
Her bosom how snowy!
Each feature
Is sweeter,
Poor Venus, than thine!
Her mind like her face is
Adorned with all graces,
Not Pallas possesses
A wit so divine.

What crowds are bleeding,
While Chloe's ne'er heeding,
All lying
A-dying
Through cruel disdain:
Ye Gods deign to warm her,
Or quickly disarm her,
While Chloe's a charmer
Your temples are vain."[1]

[1] Rev. Josiah Relph.

One of the most popular poems of the eighteenth century was *Colin's Complaint*, by Nicholas Rowe, which gives us, in the usual pastoral form, a picture of Colin deceived by a "false nymph":

"Despairing beside a clear stream,
A shepherd forsaken was laid;
And while a false nymph was his theme,
A willow supported his head.
The wind that blew over the plain,
To his sighs with a sigh did reply;
And the brook, in return to his pain,
Ran mournfully murmuring by.

'Alas, silly swain that I was!'
Thus sadly complaining, he cried,
'When first I beheld that fair face,
'Twere better by far I had died.
She talked, and I blessed the dear tongue;
When she smiled, 'twas a pleasure too great.
I listened, and cried, when she sung,
"Was nightingale ever so sweet?"

'How foolish was I to believe
She could doat on so lowly a clown,
Or that her fond heart would not grieve,
To forsake the fine folk of the town!
To think that a beauty so gay,
So kind and so constant would prove;
Or go clad like our maidens in gray,
Or live in a cottage on love!

'What though I have skill to complain,
Though the Muses my temples have crowned;
What though, when they hear my soft strain,
The virgins sit weeping around.

Ah, Colin, thy hopes are in vain,
  Thy pipe and thy laurel resign;
Thy false one inclines to a swain
  Whose music is sweeter than thine.

'And you, my companions so dear,
  Who sorrow to see me betrayed,
Whatever I suffer, forbear,
  Forbear to accuse the false maid.
Though through the wide world I should range,
  'Tis in vain from my fortune to fly;
'Twas hers to be false and to change,
  'Tis mine to be constant and die.

'If while my hard fate I sustain,
  In her breast any pity is found,
Let her come with the nymphs of the plain,
  And see me laid low in the ground.
The last humble boon that I crave,
  Is to shade me with cypress and yew,
And when she looks down on my grave,
  Let her own that her shepherd was true.

'Then to her new love let her go,
  And deck her in golden array,
Be finest at every fine show,
  And frolic it all the long day;
While Colin, forgotten and gone,
  No more shall be talked of, or seen,
Unless when beneath the pale moon
  His ghost shall glide over the green.'"

Love songs too we find, less artificial than this. Lord George Lyttelton, whose affection for his wife Lucy was the inspiration of many of his lyrics, wrote verses that at times strike the lingering cadences of seventeenth-century song:

"The heavy hours are almost past
That part my love and me:
My longing eyes may hope at last
Their only wish to see.

But how, my Delia, will you meet
The man you've lost so long?
Will love in all your pulses beat,
And tremble on your tongue?

Will you in every look declare
Your heart is still the same;
And heal each idly-anxious care
Our fears in absence frame?

Thus, Delia, thus I paint the scene,
When shortly we shall meet;
And try what yet remains between
Of loitering time to cheat.

But if the dream that soothes my mind
Shall false and groundless prove;
If I am doomed at length to find
You have forgot to love;

All I of Venus ask, is this;
No more to let us join:
But grant me here the flattering bliss,
To die, and think you mine."

Others sing of their loves in the light but pleasing manner of the street ballads. Such is David Garrick's homely song:

PEGGY

Once more I'll tune the vocal shell,
To hills and dales my passion tell,
A flame which time can never quell
That burns for thee, my Peggy:

Framingham State
Framingham, Massachus

Yet guitar bards the lyre shall hit,
Or say what subject is more fit,
Than to record the sparkling wit
And bloom of lovely Peggy.

The sun first rising in the morn,
That paints the dew-bespangled thorn,
Does not so much the day adorn
As does my lovely Peggy:
And when in Thetis' lap to rest,
He streaks with gold the ruddy west,
She's not so beauteous as undrest
Appears my lovely Peggy.

When Zephyr on the violet blows
Or breathes upon the blushing rose,
He does not half the sweets disclose
As does my lovely Peggy:
I stole a kiss the other day,
And trust me, naught but truth I say,
The fragrance of the blooming May
Is not so sweet as Peggy.

Were she arrayed in rustic weed,
With her the bleating flocks I'd feed,
And pipe upon the oaten reed,
To please my lovely Peggy:
With her a cottage would delight,
All's happy when she's in my sight;
But when she's gone it's endless night—
All's dark without my Peggy.

While bees from flower to flower shall rove,
And linnets warble through the grove,
Or stately swans the rivers love,
So long shall I love Peggy:
And when Death with his pointed dart
Shall strike the blow that rives my heart,
My words shall be, when I depart,
"Adieu, my lovely Peggy."

But Garrick was not always the poet of so constant a passion. At another time he sings of love the rover as well—indeed he gives us love's paradox:

"Would you taste the sweets of love,
Ever change and ever rove,
Fly at pleasure, and away;
Love's the cup of bliss and woe,
Nectar if you taste and go,
Poison if you stay.

Would you taste the sweets of love,
Never change and never rove,
Fly from pleasures that betray;
Love's the cup of bliss and woe,
Poison if you taste and go,
Nectar if you stay."

An anonymous writer has left us in a *Miscellany* published at Oxford in 1731 a picture of the ideal woman—inevitably a woman of reason:

"Prudence does o'er her wit preside;
And Reason all her passions' guide.
Modesty dwells upon her cheek.
The Graces in her language speak.
Beauty sits on her face confest.
Virtue, with no ill thoughts opprest,
Serenes her brow, and calms her breast."

Sometimes in these eighteenth-century love songs we find older poetic conventions such as that of the rose. Elijah Fenton has left us a happy example of it in the following poem:—

"See, Sylvia, see this new-blown rose,
The image of thy blush,
Mark how it smiles upon the bush,
And triumphs as it grows!

'Oh, pluck it not! we'll come anon,'
Thou say'st. Alas! 'twill then be gone.

Now its purple beauty's spread,
Soon it will droop and fall,
And soon it will not be at all;
No fine things draw a length of thread.
Then tell me, seems it not to say,
'Come on and crop me whilst you may'?"

William Broome in a charming poem to Lady Jane Wharton employs the same symbolism with good effect:

The Rose-bud

Queen of fragrance, lovely Rose,
The beauties of thy leaves disclose!
The winter's past, the tempests fly,
Soft gales breathe gently through the sky;
The lark sweet-warbling on the wing
Salutes the gay return of Spring:
The silver dews, the vernal showers,
Call forth a bloomy waste of flowers;
The joyous fields, the shady woods,
Are clothed with green, or swell with buds:
Then haste thy beauties to disclose,
Queen of fragrance, lovely Rose!

Thou, beauteous flower, a welcome guest,
Shalt flourish on the fair one's breast,
Shalt grace her hand, or deck her hair,
The flower most sweet, the nymph most fair.
Breathe soft, ye winds! be calm, ye skies!
Arise, ye flowery race, arise!
And haste thy beauties to disclose,
Queen of fragrance, lovely Rose!

But thou, fair nymph, thyself survey
In this sweet offspring of a day:
That miracle of face must fail;
Thy charms are sweet, but charms are frail:
Swift as the short-lived flower they fly,
At morn they bloom, at evening die:
Though sickness yet awhile forbears,
Yet Time destroys what sickness spares.
Now Helen lives alone in fame,
And Cleopatra's but a name.
Time must indent that heavenly brow,
And thou must be what they are now.

This moral to the fair disclose,
Queen of fragrance, lovely Rose.

William Somervile, or Somerville, has left a charming and once-famous poem, *On Presenting to a Lady a White Rose and a Red on the Tenth of June*:

"If this pale rose offend your sight,
It in your bosom wear;
'Twill blush to find itself less white,
And turn Lancastrian there.

But, Celia, should the red be chose,
With gay vermilion bright,
'Twould sicken at each blush that glows,
And in despair turn white.

Let politicians idly prate,
Their Babels build in vain;
As uncontrollable as Fate,
Imperial love shall reign.

Each haughty faction shall obey
And Whigs and Tories join,
Submit to your despotic sway,
Confess your right divine.

Yet this, my gracious monarch, own,
They're tyrants that oppress;
'Tis mercy must support your throne,
And 'tis like Heaven to bless."

Thomas Fitzgerald is the author of a delicate poem in which the rose symbolism appears:

" The charms which blooming beauty shows
From faces heavenly fair,
We to the lily and the rose
With semblance apt compare:

With semblance apt, for ah, how soon,
How soon they all decay!
The lily droops, the rose is gone,
And beauty fades away."

Our last example of these rose poems of the eighteenth century is provided by Johnson's friend, Anna Williams, appearing in her *Miscellanies* in 1766:

" Child of summer, lovely rose,
In thee what blushing beauty glows,
But ere to-morrow's setting sun
Thy beauty fades, thy form is gone;
Yet though no grace thy buds retain,
Thy pleasing odours still remain:
Cleora's smile, like thine, sweet flower,
Shall bloom and wither in an hour;
But mental fragrance still will last,
When youth and youthful charms are past.
Ye fair, betimes the moral prize,
'Tis lasting beauty to be wise."

Sometimes a knowledge of contemporary social life will throw a new light upon a poem—vitalising what seemed dead. When Lord Dorset writes,—

" Dorinda's sparkling wit and eyes
United, cast too fierce a light,
Which blazes high but quickly dies,
Pains not the heart, but hurts the sight.

Love is a calmer, gentler joy,
Smooth are his looks, and soft his pace;
Her cupid is a blackguard boy,
That runs his link full in your face."—

to the modern reader it appears a mere conceit. Dorinda's cupid is but a Dresden china figure of a link boy, holding in his frail and tiny hands the painted torch of love. But if we place beside the poem such extracts from the contemporary journals as the following, taken from *The Gentleman's Magazine*, we see it in a different light:

" A remarkable robbery was committed near Moorfields by a linkman, who having offered his service to a country gentleman to light him through the fog, decoyed him into a byeplace and with an accomplice, *after thrusting the link in his face*, took from him great-coat, watch and money."

The poem is now changed for the modern reader. Its quality is entirely different. No longer is Dorinda a merely ornamental figure requiring the delicate imagery of Dresden china, but a woman capable, active, of violent passions, dangerously vital—no longer is the poet a mere inventor of far-sought and unnatural conceits, but a man speaking naturally of intimate feeling, emphasising his conceptions by most forcible illustrations drawn from the immediate reality of everyday life.

With this very inadequate survey I must leave the ordinary love lyrics of the eighteenth century, and come to one aspect of love which, strangely enough,

found finer expression in this age than at any other period, opposed as it seems to our general conception of the times.

I mean the celebration of married love, of domestic happiness. Here, if anywhere in love song, the eighteenth century excelled its rivals. Nor perhaps, upon examination, is this fact so surprising or paradoxical as may at first appear. When we recall the "reasonable" attitude to life, the limited expectations of happiness cultivated by the devotees of reason, their desire for calm, we can easily believe that the unrest and intensity of love unsatisfied, was too disturbing, the feelings it excited were too violent, to find adequate expression within the limits they had themselves prescribed. But in the rest and security of a happy domestic life there was to be found the highest happiness life could give. This was all they asked of the gods—a comfortable home, a pleasant, loving wife who gave no trouble, could cook well and manage a home efficiently, and sometimes, the pleasure of hearing children's voices and seeing the beloved wife live again in a child. It was very true to average human nature, and the greater part of eighteenth-century verse is the poetry of average human nature.

So we find the poets of the day not unfrequently singing of wives with an enthusiasm not always shown for lovers and mistresses.

"If there be,
Joy for me,
More than that of roving,
'Tis a wife
During life,
Dearly loved, and loving.

Glorious prize,
Would she rise!
To this one endeavour,
Luck, be true;
Then adieu
Lotteries for ever." [1]

Dr Cotton, he who received Cowper into his "Collegium Insanorum" at St Albans, has left us a pleasant poem on domestic happiness:

The Fire-side

Dear Chloe, while the busy crowd,
The vain, the wealthy, and the proud,
In Folly's maze advance;
Though singularity and pride
Be called our choice, we'll step aside,
Nor join the giddy dance.

From the gay world we'll oft retire
To our own family and fire,
Where love our hours employs;
No noisy neighbour enters here,
No intermeddling stranger near,
To spoil our heartfelt joys.

If solid happiness we prize,
Within our breast this jewel lies;
And they are fools who roam;
The world has nothing to bestow,
From our own selves our joys must flow,
And that dear hut, our home.

. . . . . .

Though fools spurn Hymen's gentle powers,
We, who improve his golden hours,
By sweet experience know,

[1] George Jeffreys.

That marriage, rightly understood,
Gives to the tender and the good
A paradise below.

Our babes shall richest comforts bring;
If tutored right, they'll prove a spring,
Whence pleasures ever rise:
We'll form their minds with studious care,
To all that's manly, good, and fair,
And train them for the skies.

While they our wisest hours engage,
They'll joy our youth, support our age,
And crown our hoary hairs:
They'll grow in virtue every day,
And thus our fondest loves repay,
And recompense our cares.

No borrowed joys! They're all our own,
While to the world we live unknown,
Or by the world forgot:
Monarchs! we envy not your state;
We look with pity on the great,
And bless our humble lot.

Our portion is not large indeed,
But then how little do we need!
For Nature's calls are few!
In this the art of living lies,
To want no more than may suffice,
And make that little do.

We'll therefore relish with content
Whate'er kind Providence has sent,
Nor aim beyond our power;
For if our stock be very small,
'Tis prudence to enjoy it all,
Nor lose the present hour.

To be resigned, when ills betide,
Patient, when favours are denied,
And pleased with favours given;
Dear Chloe, this is wisdom's part,
This is that incense of the heart,
Whose fragrance smells to heaven.

We'll ask no long-protracted treat,
(Since winter life is seldom sweet);
But when our feast is o'er,
Grateful from table we'll arise,
Nor grudge our sons, with envious eyes,
The relics of our store.

Thus hand in hand through life we'll go,
Its chequered paths of joy and woe
With cautious steps we'll tread;
Quit its vain scenes without a tear,
Without a trouble or a fear,
And mingle with the dead.

While Conscience, like a faithful friend,
Shall through the gloomy vale attend,
And cheer our dying breath;
Shall when all other comforts cease
Like a kind angel whisper peace
And smooth the bed of death.

In such verses the excellent common sense of the age finds expression. It will, like Johnson, "not expect more from life than life will afford." The poem indeed might be taken as a verse translation of one of Johnson's letters:

"Hope is itself a species of happiness, and perhaps the chief happiness which this world affords: but like all other pleasures immoderately enjoyed, the excesses of hope must be expiated by pain; and expectations

improperly indulged, must end in disappointment. If it be asked, what is the improper expectation which it is dangerous to indulge, experience will quickly answer, that it is such expectation as is dictated not by reason, but by desire; expectation raised, not by the common occurrences of life, but by the wants of the expectant; an expectation that requires the common course of things to be changed, and the general rules of action to be broken."

Those sentiments can be found in the prose and poetry of a thousand writers of the time. Never surely in England was there such a general uniformity of attitude to life as in the eighteenth century.

Edward Moore, editor of *The World*, also sang of the joys of domesticity:

"How blessed has my time been! What days have
I known!
Since wedlock's soft bondage made Jesse my own.
So joyful my heart is; so easy, my chain;
That freedom is tasteless, and roving a pain!

Through walks grown with woodbines, as often
we stray,
Around us our boys and girls frolic and play.
How pleasing their sport is, the wanton ones see;
And borrow their looks from my Jesse and me."

Moore, however, is a little less reliable than Dr Cotton:

"To try her sweet temper, sometimes am I seen
In revels all day with the nymphs of the green;
Though painful my absence, my doubts she beguiles,
And meets me, at night, with compliance and smiles."

But this husband of a perfect wife is as faithful as the more sedate mental specialist:

" Ye shepherds so gay, who make love to ensnare;
And cheat, with false vows, the too credulous Fair!
In search of true pleasure, how vainly you roam!
To hold it for life, you must find it at home!"

An anonymous writer in *The London Chronicle* of 1783 gives us another of these pictures of domestic bliss:

THE FIRESIDE

The hearth was clean, the fire clear,
The kettle on for tea;
Ranger was in his elbow chair
As blessed no man could be!

Clarinda, who his heart possest,
And was his new-made bride,
With head elate upon his breast,
Sat toying by his side.

Stretched at his feet, in happy state,
A favourite dog was laid;
By whom a little sportive cat
In wanton humour played.

Clarinda's hand he gently pressed;
She stole an amorous kiss,
And blushing modesty confessed
The fullness of her bliss.

" Be this eternity!" he cried,
" And let no more be given!
Continue thus my fireside!
I ask no more of Heaven!"

But we will leave this spectacle of the late eighteenth century making headlong for "Victorianism," and retrace our steps to 1726, where in a book of *Miscellaneous Poems* edited by David Lewis we find in one unacknowledged poem the finest expression of domestic happiness which the eighteenth century achieved:

"Away: let nought to love displeasing,
My Winifreda, move your care:
Let nought delay the heavenly blessing,
Nor squeamish pride, nor gloomy fear.

What though no grants of royal donors
With pompous titles grace our blood:
We'll shine in more substantial honours,
And to be noble we'll be good.

Our name, whilst virtue thus we tender,
Will sweetly sound where'er 'tis spoke,
And all the great ones, they shall wonder
How they respect such little folk.

What though from Fortune's lavish bounty
No mighty treasures we possess:
We'll find within our pittance, plenty,
And be content without excess.

Still shall each kind returning season
Sufficient for our wishes give:
For we will live a life of reason,
And that's the only life to live.

Through youth and age, in love excelling,
We'll hand in hand together tread,
Sweet smiling Peace shall crown our dwelling,
And babes, sweet smiling babes, our bed.

How should I love the pretty creatures,
Whilst round my knees they fondly clung,
To see them look their mother's features,
To hear them lisp their mother's tongue!

And when with envy, Time transported,
Shall think to rob us of our joys,
You'll in your girls again be courted,
And I'll go wooing in my boys."

In leaving the love poetry of the eighteenth century, I will close with one of the many verse tributes which Samuel Bishop, once headmaster of Merchant Taylor's School, gave to his wife in celebration of the happy life they led. The lines were sent to her on the anniversary of their wedding day, which was also her birthday, with a ring:

" 'Thee, Mary, with this ring I wed'—
So, fourteen years ago, I said—
Behold another ring!—'for what?'
'To wed thee o'er again?' Why not?

With that first ring I married youth,
Grace, beauty, innocence, and truth;
Taste long admired, sense long revered,
And all my Molly then appeared.

If she, by merit since disclosed,
Prove twice the woman I supposed,
I plead that double merit now,
To justify a double vow.

Here then to-day (with faith as sure,
With ardour as intense, as pure,
As when, amidst the rites divine,
I took thy troth and plighted mine),
To thee, sweet girl, my second ring
A token and a pledge I bring:

With this I wed, till death us part,
Thy riper virtues to my heart;
Those virtues, which before untried,
The wife has added to the bride:
Those virtues, whose progressive claim,
Endearing wedlock's very name,
My soul enjoys, my song approves,
For conscience' sake as well as love's.

And why?—They show me every hour,
Honour's high thought, Affection's power,
Discretion's deed, sound Judgment's sentence,—
And teach me all things—but repentance."

Love in the eighteenth century, as ever, had its varieties; but in the literature of the age, in its verse and prose, its journals and records, we find conclusive evidence of a high and widespread enjoyment of domestic felicity, full of a quiet charm.

When Dr Johnson wrote in *The Rambler* for 10th November 1750, "To be happy at home is the ultimate result of all ambition, the end to which every enterprise and labour tends, and of which every desire prompts the prosecution," he was obviously, as often, expressing not only his own personal conviction, but a general feeling of his time. Nevertheless, few surely even of that age would have gone so far as Cowper when he wrote:

"Domestic happiness, thou only bliss
Of Paradise that has survived the fall!"

But we must not forget that Cowper was a bachelor, even if a much domesticated one.

III

DEATH

As in a journey just begun,
  We think the distance vast,
Yet while we travel gaily on,
  Insensibly 'tis past,

So in our youth we measure slow
  Long views of promised breath,
Till like a shadow out we go,
  And vanish into death.

AARON HILL.

IN love, life's great affirmation, and in death, the great negation of life, the lyric poet has ever found the chief sources of inspiration. In the eighteenth century death was generally feared perhaps more than at any other time before or since in English history. What then is the particular quality of the lyrics of those minor poets of the age who sang of death?

In one respect at least eighteenth-century elegiac verse is specially interesting to the modern reader, because there if anywhere he may find a key to one of the problems of the century—its manner of expressing and creating intimate feeling.

Again and again the modern reader of eighteenth-century poetry must feel that verses which leave him cold were for the poet's contemporaries full of pathos. Nor is direct evidence of this far to seek.

Dr Johnson, in popular opinion the least impressionable of men, was found by Boswell in tears over Beattie's *Hermit*.

"Such was his sensibility [says his biographer], and so much was he affected by pathetic poetry, that when he was reading Beattie's *Hermit* in my presence, it brought tears into his eyes."

This surely is a significant and therefore an interesting fact.

It may be worth our while in this attempt to investigate some of those elements which form the temper, the quality, of the eighteenth century to stop for a moment and endeavour to realise what exactly it was that so affected Johnson. We have the good fortune to know what lines of the poem made the most powerful appeal to him:

"'Tis night, and the landscape is lovely no more;
I mourn,[1] but, ye woodlands, I mourn not for you,
For morn is approaching your charms to restore,
Perfumed with fresh fragrance and glittering with dew.
Nor yet for the ravage of Winter I mourn;
Kind Nature the embryo-blossom shall save—
But when shall Spring visit the mouldering urn?
O when shall it dawn on the night of the grave!"

To the modern reader the lines probably appear mere empty rhetoric, as he passes hastily, untouched. The mental and emotional currents of later ages have borne him far from the place where Beattie and his contemporaries stood. Here, as everywhere, the tide of life bears us away from an understanding and appreciation of the thought and art of those of our predecessors whose work is too deeply penetrated by evanescent modes of feeling and expression, too little imbued by that elemental spirit of humanity which

[1] It may be well to remind the reader that "mourn" was pronounced in the eighteenth century to rhyme with "urn," as later here. Hence "mourn" and "morn" are not the repetitions they appear to be.

gives to art a permanent appeal. We have seen this in our own day—the lines from Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* or Rossetti's *Portrait*, which moved men of taste and culture as late as the nineties, and now set the modern student a-giggle. If we are quite sure that those of the earlier age were hopelessly wrong, can we then be so comfortably certain that we are quite right? Dr Johnson may have found imaginary virtue in Beattie's *Hermit*, but we also may overlook virtues in it that were more obvious when it first appeared.

In criticising such verses, work not of the first order, only by imaginative sympathy and insight can a fair estimate be made. Beattie may leave us cold, but before we leave him we should surely realise what it was in his poem that moved Johnson, and in so doing we shall gain a more intimate knowledge of Johnson's temperament, and of the quality of Johnson's age. There was first in Beattie's lines a new romantic note, due to the rhythm and the content. It is the beginning of what afterwards in the work of Thomas Moore took the world by storm for a time, and in Byron found its finest form combined with a firmer intellectual content. It is romantic in its blending of nature with human thought and emotion about life and death, and because it expressed more felicitously than most poems of the time, because indeed it tried to show what many refused to attempt, the hope, already growing tremulous and uncertain, of eternity, the thought and fear of death, which lay over the lives of men like a shadow, over the life of Johnson himself, so darkly; it was because all these elements in the poem gave to it a significance as the expression of a quality so important in his own life and character that Johnson was moved

so strongly, and revealed, incidentally, how much of the romantic was hidden in his strangely mingled and restrained temperament.[1]

How near to the heart of the age such musings upon death were, is seen by the success which attended the few leading poets who dared to break through the reserve of the time and sing freely of this shadow over the lives of men. Young treated it in the manner of the pious moralist mingled with that of the showman who knows the economic value of the "Chamber of Horrors." Gray sang of it as a poetic recluse whose melancholy, at times revealing life in a kind of sunset-splendour, gave him at least æsthetic satisfaction.

All such poems, however, are but minor lights of the constellation which blazes in the poetic firmament of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the constellation whose major stars are Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Pope's *Essay on Man*, and Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. For these three poems, so different superficially, are linked together by the fact that each is the attempt of its respective century to "justify the ways of God to men." With the advent of a "reasonable" age it was inevitable that such attempts would be made, and in the different way in which each age attempts it we may learn the changes of outlook which have passed over those centuries.

The eighteenth century, at any rate, was keenly interested in Death, tricked death out in all the morbid pageantry it could devise of black plumes and drapery, midnight burials by torchlight, sepulchral urns, memorial stones and temples. At times indeed, amidst

[1] *Vide infra*, p. 127.

the orgy of woe, we can detect a positive enjoyment of this elaborated sorrow.

"Poor Mr Thomson, Mr Pitt tells me, is *dead*" (Shenstone writes to his friend Jago on hearing of the death of the author of the *Seasons*). "He was to have been at Hagley this week, and then I should probably have seen him here. As it is, I will erect an urn in Virgil's Grove to his memory. I was really as much shocked to hear of his death, as if I had known and loved him for a number of years."

"I am fully bent on raising a neat urn to him in my lower grove" (Shenstone adds eight days later), "if Mr Lyttelton does not inscribe one at Hagley *before* me. But I should be extremely glad of your advice whereabouts to place it."[1]

In a retired part of his garden at Twickenham Pope erected a plain obelisk eighteen feet high, in memory of his mother, with the inscription:

"Ah Editha!
Matrum Optima,
Mulierum Amantissima,
Vale!"

Johnson, too, reveals the attitude of the age to death when he says of Gray's *Elegy*:

"The *Churchyard* abounds with images which find a mirrour in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo."

But the eighteenth century, though rhetorical at times, was, in its earlier years at least, no age of expansive feeling. Young might swim to fame if not fortune on a flood of rhetoric which is not without occasional

[1] The italics are Shenstone's.

beauties; Bolingbroke, weeping over the bedside of dying Pope, might raise beseeching hands to heaven, repeatedly exclaiming: "O great God, what is man?" Burke might flourish his dagger in the face of the House of Commons, nevertheless the restraint which reason and society imposed laid a strong hand on poetry, so that not until the romantic and sentimental spirit grows towards the close of the century do we find a general extravagance in the poetic treatment of death. They attempt to conceal, not to intensify, feeling.

Here then, in emotional expression, the poets of the earlier eighteenth century are subtle. But their manner is not our manner to-day, and the gradual tuning of our ears to detect the elusive beauty of a note now seldom, if ever, struck is one of the chief benefits gained by a thoughtful study of eighteenth-century verse.

The charm of such elegiac verse of the eighteenth century at its best is due to its peculiar quality, in which a Stoic acceptance of death, a classic restraint amidst sorrow, a tearless grief, find expression in forms as cold apparently as the marble upon which so frequently they appeared. The effect for us is intensified by the unconscious irony with which these eighteenth-century mourners so often mistook their pagan fortitude for Christian resignation, presenting it in a religious dress which fails to conceal its true nature.

This characteristic of eighteenth-century elegiac verse is most clearly seen in the epitaphs of the time. Addison in his famous essay on the tombs of Westminster Abbey says of the epitaphs there:

" Most of them recorded nothing else of the buried person, but that he was born upon one day, and died upon another : the whole history of his life being comprehended in those two circumstances that are common to all mankind. I could not but look upon those registers of existence, whether of brass or marble, as a kind of satire upon the departed persons who had left no other memorial of them, but that they were born and that they died."

The same idea finds expression in the following epitaph :—

" Here lieth one that once was born and cried,
Lived several years, and then—and then—he died."

We learn too, from the record of Addison's afternoon amongst the tombs, in 1711, that many of the inscriptions were spoiled for him by excessive praise of the dead. Some of the monuments

" were covered with such extravagant epitaphs, that if it were possible for the dead person to be acquainted with them, he would blush at the praise which his friends have bestowed upon him."

Dr Johnson, in his " Essay on Epitaphs," contributed to *The Gentleman's Magazine* in 1740, informs us that despite the superabundance of rules expounded by the critics of the day, none has laid down regulations for the writing of correct epitaphs :

" The reasons for this neglect it is useless to inquire, and perhaps impossible to discover ; it might be justly expected that this kind of writing would have been the favourite topic of criticism, and that self-love might have produced some regard for it, in those authors that have crowded libraries with elaborate

dissertations upon Homer: since to afford a subject for heroic poems is the privilege of very few, but every man may expect to be recorded in an epitaph, and therefore finds some interest in providing that his memory may not suffer by an unskilful panegyric."

Johnson regards the epitaph as a means of perpetuating the knowledge of good actions, and of promoting virtue:

"The principal intention of epitaphs is to perpetuate the examples of virtue, that the tomb of a good man may supply the want of his presence, and veneration for his memory produce the same effect as the observation of his life. Those epitaphs are, therefore, the most perfect, which set virtue in the strongest light, and are best adapted to exalt the reader's ideas and rouse his emulation."

He then proceeds to lay down certain rules for the guidance of those who write funeral inscriptions. In the case of a really famous man, no list of his deeds is to be given, as his name alone recalls these, and to give such a catalogue would mar his dignity.

"Next in dignity to the bare name is a short character simple and unadorned, without exaggeration, superlatives or rhetoric."

Although the eighteenth century provides innumerable examples of exaggerated eulogy of the dead, many of the epitaphs of the time are in harmony with this rule. By the restraint of their references to the merit of the deceased, often by mere suggestion, they achieve their artistic aim. Exaggeration and restraint, however, may be occasionally blended with excellent effect:

"O'er this marble drop a tear,
Here lies fair Rosalinde.
All mankind was pleased with her,
And she with all mankind."[1]

Even that rough artist "Peter Pindar"[2] could strike out a graceful and tender epitaph:

"Beneath this turf, in sweet repose,
The friend of all—a fair one lies—
Yet hence let sorrow vent her woes,
Far hence let pity pour her sighs.

Though every hour thy life approved,
The muse the strain of grief forbears,
Nor wishes, though by all beloved,
To call thee to a world of tears.

Best of thy sex! alas, farewell!
From this dark scene removed, to shine
Where purest shades of mortals dwell,
And virtue waits to welcome thine."

Johnson in his "Essay on Epitaphs" has shown us why in such verses the natural restraint of the eighteenth century was intensified, and considers that this fact chiefly differentiates the epitaph from the elegy:

"In writing epitaphs, one circumstance is to be considered, which affects no other composition; the place in which they are now commonly found restrains them to a particular air of solemnity, and debars them from the admission of all lighter or gayer ornaments. In this it is that the style of an epitaph necessarily differs from that of an elegy."

For this reason too, because they must be in or near churches, only orthodox sentiments, says Johnson,

[1] Hon. Mrs Mary Monk. [2] John Wolcot.

must be admitted. Classical mythology and Roman inscriptions are banned. But these restrictions were never operative in the eighteenth century.

"Life is a jest; and all things show it.
I thought so once; but now I know it,"

writes genial Gay, cynically, for his own tomb. The cynical realism of the age inspires such epitaphs as the following:—

"Here is my much-loved Celia laid,
At rest from all her earthly labours!
Glory to God! peace to the dead,
And to the ears of all her neighbours."[1]

In one respect the cult of the epitaph in the eighteenth century may have had some little influence in turning poetry away from the vague and general, then so popular, towards the definite and particular, characteristic of the romantic age. Johnson indeed lays it down as a principle that an epitaph should not be general, as then the mind would be lost in the extent of an indefinite idea:

"When we hear only of a good and great man, we know not in what class to place him, nor have any notion of his character, distinct from that of a thousand others; his example can have no effect upon our conduct, as we have nothing remarkable or eminent to propose to our imitation."

Epitaphs composed upon such a theory naturally departed from the ideal of the "classical" art of the day as laid down by Pope in the *Essay on Criticism* and by Reynolds in his *Discourses*. For the ideal of the "classical" artist was to represent a type. But

[1] Anon.

excellent as the intention of such theorisers was, it cannot be said that they succeeded in any high degree in their attempts to leave the general and represent the particular. It was almost inevitable that a great number of inscriptions should merely catalogue the virtues of the deceased. Nevertheless at times even this is done with real grace and charm, as in Mallet's

Epitaph on a Young Lady

This humble grave though no proud structures grace,
Yet Truth and Goodness sanctify the place;
Yet blameless Virtue that adorned thy bloom,
Lamented maid, now weeps upon thy tomb.
O 'scaped from life! O safe on that calm shore,
Where sin, and pain, and passion are no more!
What never Wealth could buy, nor Power decree,
Regard and Pity, wait sincere on thee.
Lo! soft Remembrance drops a pious tear;
And holy Friendship stands a mourner here.

There is the subtle emotion of the eighteenth century which found its finest form in the work of Collins; nor is it unreal or cold as the modern reader may at first think it.

At times in epitaph, as elsewhere, the consolation of reason is invoked:

"No length of melancholy years
Revives the buried man:
Let reason dry his widow's tears,
Since Fortune never can."[1]

The reticent pathos of Aaron Hill's epitaph, *On a Young Lady who died Unmarried*, makes it one of the best of its kind:

[1] George Jeffreys.

"Ripe in virtue, green in years,
Here a matchless maid lies low:
None could read, and spare their tears,
Did they but her sweetness know.

Humbly wise and meekly good,
No earthly lover's arms she blessed;
But, full of grace, her Saviour wooed,
And hides her blushes in His breast."

Again and again we find in the inscriptions of the time such quaint conceits as this:

"Entombed here lies sweet smiling Nan,
Ravished by death, ne'er touched by man;
Near her the faithful youth's interred,
Who death with her to life preferred;
In him death's utmost power behold,
Since, laid near her, he can be cold."[1]

In the following epitaph, *On Two Twin Sisters*, we find a delicate grace heightened by the conceit with which it closes:

"Fair marble, tell to future days
That here two virgin sisters lie,
Whose life employed each tongue in praise;
Whose death gave tears to every eye.

In stature, beauty, years, and fame,
Together as they grew, they shone;
So much alike, so much the same,
That death mistook them both for one."[2]

Many of the most felicitous epitaphs are those on children. Henry Carey, famous as the author of *Sally in our Alley*, himself a scoffer at the child-verses of his contemporary, Ambrose Philips, has left us a few

[1] The Hon. Thomas Hervey. [2] Anon.

delicately pathetic lines on the death of his own daughter, who died on her father's birthday:

"That fatal day, which lent my earliest breath,
Gave my dear girl to the cold arms of Death:
Others in triumph may their birthday keep;
Mine calls aloud for tears, and bids me weep."

The following, *On an Infant*, is typical:—

"Beneath, a sleeping infant lies;
To earth whose ashes lent,
More glorious shall hereafter rise,
Though not more innocent.

When the archangel's trump shall blow,
And souls and bodies join,
What crowds will wish their lives below
Had been as short as thine."[1]

Even "snivelling Jerningham," as Macaulay called him, can give us true and tender verses on the death of his daughter, despite touches of rhetoric and occasionally stilted phrasing.

"Ah, venerate this hallowed ground,
And mark the infant virtues round!
See Innocence, celestial fair,
With childhood, Heaven's peculiar care:
See beauty opening into bloom,
Bending o'er this youthful tomb:
Behold affection that endears,
And wit beyond an infant's years,
And constancy (mid mortal pain,
Still, still refusing to complain)
By sorrow led, a choral band,
Fix'd on this sacred spot, they stand!
And as they view this marble stone,
Their little mistress they bemoan."

[1] Samuel Wesley.

With one more example of these memorials of early death I leave the epitaphs of the eighteenth century and pass on to other elegiac verse of the time:

Epitaph on a Beautiful Infant

Bright to the sun expands the vernal rose,
And sweet the lily of the valley blows;
Sudden impetuous whirlwinds sweep the sky.
They shed their fragrance, droop the head, and die.
Thus this fair infant from life's storms retired,
Put forth fair blossoms, charmed us, and expired.[1]

In the more formal elegiac poems of the age we see the same attitude to death as that shown in the epitaphs. But here rhetoric could be more freely employed, as the poet was no longer restricted to the space allowed by monument or tombstone. As the century advanced and the romantic and sentimental movements increased their influence, death and the ceremonial of death was exploited by many a poetaster who, in his desire for glory, did not hesitate to make himself ridiculous.

While Augustan restraint withheld the elegiasts in the earlier part of the century, if elegy attained no exalted level, it at least avoided bathos. Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard* and *Elegy to the Memory of an Unfortunate Lady* were the admired patterns for the elegiac singers of the day, and these poems, though stiff and stilted in places, contain many passages of beauty and power. Dryden's *Ode on Anne Killigrew* was also an influence, perhaps indeed an influence upon the best elegy by a minor poet that the century produced, Tickell's upon Addison, of which Johnson wrote: "nor is a more sublime or

[1] Thomas Maurice.

more elegant funeral poem to be found in the whole compass of English literature." That love of the pageantry of death so dear to the age finds expression in the following lines from Tickell's poem:—

"Can I forget the dismal night that gave
My soul's best part for ever to the grave!
How silent did his old companions tread,
By midnight lamps, the mansions of the dead,
Through breathing statues, then unheeded things,
Through rows of warriors, and through walks of kings!
What awe did the slow solemn knell inspire;
The pealing organ, and the pausing choir;
The duties by the lawn-robed prelate paid;
And the last words, that dust to dust conveyed!"

And later the poet exclaims:

"Oft let me range the gloomy isles alone,
Sad luxury! to vulgar minds unknown."

Perhaps it was Dryden's *Ode on Anne Killigrew* that shaped the following passage:—

"In what new region, to the just assigned,
What new employments please th'unbodied mind?
A wingèd virtue, through th'ethereal sky,
From world to world, unwearied does he fly;
Or curious trace the long laborious maze
Of heaven's decrees, where wondering angels gaze?
Does he delight to hear bold seraphs tell
How Michael battled, and the Dragon fell?
Or, mixt with milder Cherubim, to glow
In hymns of love, not ill essayed below?
Or dost thou warn poor mortals left behind,
A task well suited to thy gentle mind?"

In a later stanza describing the desolation which now hangs over natural beauty, once the scene of happiness

shared with his lost friend, Tickell approaches, in spirit, a passage of Tennyson's *In Memoriam*:

"Thou hill, whose brow the antique structures grace,
Reared by bold chiefs of Warwick's noble race,
Why, once so loved, whene'er thy bower appears,
O'er my dim eyeballs glance the sudden tears?
How sweet were once thy prospects, fresh and fair,
Thy sloping walks, and unpolluted air!
How sweet the glooms beneath thy aged trees,
Thy noon-tide shadow, and thy evening breeze!
His image thy forsaken bowers restore;
Thy walks and airy prospects charm no more;
No more the summer in thy glooms allayed,
Thy evening breezes, and thy noon-day shade."

The popularity of Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* was such that a flood of imitations soon poured forth; nor was there any abatement of the waters until the close of the century. The only good produced by these many imitators of Gray was to show even more clearly by contrast with their own facile imitations the exquisite delicacy and skill of the original. This popularity of Gray's *Elegy* had one other result. Gray's measures became the accepted elegiac stanza-form. Gray was not the first to employ it. Dryden (to take the most significant source), amongst others, had used it for his ode to Cromwell and *Annus Mirabilis*, and in his preface to the latter poem had described it as being "more noble and of greater dignity both for the sound and number than any other verse in use amongst us."

Gray was not the first to revive the measure, but after the publication of his *Elegy* it became the accepted

elegiac stanza. William Mason, in a note to *Isis, a Monologue*, says:

"It was originally entitled an Elegy; but the term is altered as not being written in alternate rhymes, which since Mr Gray's exquisite *Elegy in a Country Churchyard* has generally obtained, and seems to be more suited to that species of poem."

The foolish or witty imitations of Gray I pass over, as well as Goldsmith's genial raillery of the follies of these elegiac poetasters.

Under the influence of Milton's *Lycidas*, Lord George Lyttelton wrote a *Monody* upon the death of his much-loved wife, which attains in places a higher poetic level than most of the minor poets of his day reached in Elegy. The poem was popular throughout the eighteenth century, and as late as 1801 was deemed sufficiently important to receive a place in *Elegant Extracts*. It is much too long to quote in full, and is besides very unequal in quality, but the following passage I will here quote:—

"In vain I look around,
O'er all the well-known ground,
My Lucy's wonted footsteps to descry;
Where oft we used to walk,
Where oft in tender talk
We saw the summer sun go down the sky;
Nor by yon fountain's side,
Nor where its waters glide
Along the valley, can she now be found:
In all the wide-stretched prospect's ample bound
No more my mournful eye
Can aught of her espy,
But the sad, sacred earth, where her dear relics lie."

In the heroic couplet we find poems approximating to the usual epitaph, but longer in extent and wider in range. The quality of the better kind of epitaph is also preserved in verses of this kind. A good example is the following, by Francis Fawkes :—

On the Death of a Young Gentleman

Short and precarious is the life of man ;
The line seems fathomless, but proves a span ;
A youth of follies, an old age of sorrow ;
Like flowers, to-day we bloom, we die to-morrow.
Say then, what specious reasons can we give?
And why this longing, fond desire to live?
Blind as we are to what the Lord ordains,
We stretch our troubles, and prolong our pains.
But you, blest genius, dear departed shade,
Now wear a chaplet that shall never fade ;
Now sit exalted in those realms of rest,
Where virtue reigns, and innocence is blest.
Relentless death's inevitable doom
Untimely wrapt you in the silent tomb,
Ere the first tender down o'erspread your chin,
A stranger yet to sorrow, and to sin.
As some sweet rose-bud, that has just begun
To ope its damask beauties in the sun,
Cropt by a virgin's hand, remains confest
A sweeter rosebud in her balmy breast,
Thus the fair youth, when Heaven required his breath,
Sunk, sweetly smiling in the arms of death ;
For endless joys exchanging endless strife,
And bloomed renewed in everlasting life.

In the Rev. James Fordyce's *Collection of Hymns and Sacred Poems* we find one full of the spirit of Young's *Night Thoughts* :

A Soliloquy written in a Country Churchyard

Struck with religious awe and solemn dread,
I view these gloomy mansions of the dead.
Around me tombs in mixed disorder rise,
And in mute language teach me to be wise.
Time was, these ashes lived—a time must be
When others thus may stand—and look at me.
Alarming thought! no wonder 'tis we dread
O'er these uncomfortable vaults to tread.

. . . . . .

Perhaps that skull, so horrible to view,
Was some fair maid's, ye belles, as fair as you:
These hollow sockets two bright orbs contained,
Where the loves sported, and in triumph reigned;
Here glowed the lips; there white as Parian stone,
The teeth, disposed in beauteous order shone.
This is life's goal—no farther can we view;
Beyond it all is wonderful and new.
Oh, deign! some courteous ghost, to let us know,
What we must shortly be—and you are now.

Such are many of these eighteenth-century moralisers when, temporarily withdrawing from society, they seek solitude and the morbid introspection which solitude brings to them. Here is an anonymous poem:

On an Open Grave

Laborious passenger, look down,
Behold thy journey's end;
See! whither all thy weary steps,
'Tis hither, see! they tend.

Observe the distance, mark how small,
But six foot deep or less,
A measure scarce beyond thy own,
That leads from pain to ease!

Not here alone, but wheresoe'er
Thy toiling footsteps sound;
Thy length and breadth will show the spot
Where rest is to be found.

Then patient, the fatigues of life
With this reflection bear:
That journey can't be over-long,
Whose end is everywhere.

As the romantic mood increased with the progress of the century, the treatment of death changed its quality. Gradually the gruesome moralising of Young, with his bones and skulls as examples of mortality and teachers of morality, gave way to a softer, more sentimental attitude of tender regret or gentle melancholy, which was not without a touch of pleasure in the contemplation of its own woe. Such verses are the expression of that melancholy described by Cowper as "a melancholy not unpleasing, not without its use." We find this spirit freed from self-consciousness and sentimentality again and again in the work of Collins, Gray, Parnell and others of the chief eighteenth-century poets, excluded from this volume by the limits chosen.

John Langhorne's *Wall-Flower* gives us an excellent example of this romantic, slightly self-conscious treatment of death. The wall-flower growing on the "ruined tower" leads the poet to expostulation:

" Why, when the mead, the spicy vale,
The grove and genial garden call,
Will she her fragrant soul exhale,
Unheeded on the lonely wall?

For sure was never beauty born
To live in death's deserted shade!
Come, lovely flower, my banks adorn,
My banks for life and beauty made."

Suddenly, as the poet is about to remove the flower, the " Genius of the ruin " replies, defending the dead who lie there at rest:

" From thee be far th'ungentle deed,
The honours of the dead to spoil,
Or take the sole remaining meed,
The flower that crowns their former toil!

. . . . . .

Where longs to fall that rifted spire,
As weary of th'insulting air;
The poet's thought, the warrior's fire,
The lover's sighs are sleeping there.

When that too shakes the trembling ground,
Borne down by some tempestuous sky,
And many a slumbering cottage round
Startles—how still their hearts will lie!"

Such is the variety of elegiac verse throughout the century, from the crude realism of the butcher's shop to a tender melancholy that in the weaker writers becomes a maudlin sentimentality.

Both types of verse are found throughout the century, not only running side by side, but sometimes intermingling in the same poem. This elegiac literature impresses upon the modern reader the hold that the fear of death had upon an age dominated by the most

fantastic horrors theology and crude imagination could invent. "But is not the fear of death natural to man?" asks Boswell. "So much so, Sir," said Johnson, "that the whole of life is but keeping away the thought of it." Everywhere in the literature of the time we find this attitude to death. Too often the love of life is but the reflex of this fear, a somewhat hysterical pleasure for so reasonable an age:

"To die's a lesson we shall know
Too soon without a master;
Then let us only study now
How we may live the faster." [1]

But I would conclude with what I consider one of the most charming poems on death that the eighteenth century offers. It was written by the once well-known Dr George Sewell of Hampstead, and appears in his posthumous *Works* as the conclusion to a curious and amusing essay *Of the Usefulness of Snails in Medicine*. Of his essay, as a contribution to medical science, the less said the better, but in his verses we find an echo of the quiet grace and dignity of the seventeenth century:

"Why, Damon, with the forward day,
Dost thou thy little spot survey?
From tree to tree, with doubtful cheer,
Pursue the progress of the year;
What winds arise, what rains descend,
When thou before that year shalt end?

What do thy noon-day walks avail,
To clear the leaf, and pick the snail?

[1] Chesterfield: "Verses written in a lady's *Sherlock upon Death*."

Then wantonly to death decree
An insect usefuller than thee?
Thou and the worm art brother-kind,
As low, as earthy, and as blind.

Vain wretch! canst thou expect to see
The downy peach make court to thee?
Or that thy sense shall ever meet
The bean-flower's deep-embosomed sweet?
Exhaling with an evening's blast,
Thy evenings then will all be past.

Thy narrow pride, thy fancied green,
(For vanity's in little seen)
All must be left when Death appears,
In spite of wishes, groans, and tears;
Nor one of all thy plants that grow,
But Rosemary, will with thee go."

IV

SUMMUM BONUM

Martial, the things that do attain
  The happy life, be these, I find:
The riches left, not got with pain;
  The fruitful ground, the quiet mind:

The equal friend, no grudge, no strife;
  No change of rule, nor governance;
Without disease, the healthful life;
  The household of continuance:

The mean diet, no delicate fare;
  True wisdom joined with simpleness;
The night discharged of all care,
  Where wine the wit may not oppress:

The faithful wife, without debate;
  Such sleeps as may beguile the night,
Contented with thine own estate;
  Ne wish for death, ne fear his might.

HENRY HOWARD, EARL OF SURREY.

IT is a curious fact that the one age in English literature which has been generally reproached with a lack of interest in Nature is the one whose poets, with surprising unanimity, laid their conception of ideal happiness in a country life. It is true that the appreciation of the country shown by these poets of the eighteenth century is far removed from the later romantic love of Nature's wildness, mystery, or imaginative inspiration. They are common-sense realists, who know quite clearly what good life can give, and will not lose a limited happiness by asking more.

The leading poets of the day, as we have been

constantly reminded, were poets of the Town, for whom the country had no charms. But, although true in the main, this common criticism of eighteenth-century literature needs qualification. It is true that the eighteenth-century poet could not have found satisfaction in such a retirement to the Lakes as Wordsworth made, nor did any desire arise in him to worship Nature as a mystical power. Wandering amidst the elegance of his eighteenth-century garden with its winding walks, its groves and grottos, its classic urns and temples, he appreciated Nature in that form, as something which ministered delightfully to man's enjoyment. Outside his garden, the open country was good too: good for growing corn, for feeding cattle, for the joys of hunting. Here too he appreciated Nature; here too Nature was good because it ministered to the needs and happiness of man. Hence in the eighteenth century appreciation of the country of a practical, common-sense kind was by no means lacking.

Of the eighteenth-century man, as of Peter Bell, we may say:

> "A primrose by the river's brim
> A yellow primrose was to him,
> And it was nothing more."

Indeed to the lips of the eighteenth-century poet, if he could have listened to the above quotation, the question would have immediately sprung: "What more was it?" We may according to our mood or temperament pity or praise this realistic attitude of the eighteenth century to Nature, but we must not deny that at times Nature charmed, sometimes even moved, them. We of the present day are too ready to forget

that the "poet of the coffee-house," Pope, lived from 1719 until the end of his life in the rural hamlet of Twickenham, and praised its charms even in mid-winter.

How often too, when dismissing the eighteenth-century poets of the Town, does the modern reader forget the narrow limits of London in their day.

"The capital, at the accession of Queen Anne" (says a modern writer), "including the city, Westminster, and Southwark, was almost confined to the lower part of the valley of the Thames. From east to west it extended five miles, and from north to south its greatest breadth was under two miles. At the close of the eighteenth century, calculating one continued junction of buildings, London could not have been less than eight miles in length and three miles at its extreme width."

The inhabitants of eighteenth-century London had the open country at their doors. Where the Marble Arch now stands, the town ended, and thirty minutes walking brought the traveller into the heart of the country, amidst fields, farms and brooks. Bayswater was a tiny village with fields and tea gardens, while onward to Acton stretched a tract of "delicate pleasant country," as Ralph Thoresby noted in his diary in 1712. "Paddington was as remote and rustic a village as any in the English shires, being 'from the amenity of its scenery much resorted to by the lovers of the picturesque.'" "Marylebone in 1760 was a small village distant from the city about a mile." "Tottenham Court Road, beyond Whitefield's Tabernacle (which was built in 1754 on the site of a deep pond

called 'The Little Sea') had hedges which in summer were redolent of hawthorn."

These facts we must bear in mind when we hear Johnson saying: "When a man is tired of London, he is tired of life; for there is in London all that life can afford." Even the passage in Boswell which records Johnson's strongest general denunciation of a country life reveals the fact that Johnson's dislike of the country was not shared by all:

"Our conversation turned upon living in the country" (says Boswell), "which Johnson, whose melancholy mind required the dissipation of quick successive variety, had habituated himself to consider as a kind of mental imprisonment.

"'Yet, sir,' said I, 'there are many people who are content to live in the country.'

"JOHNSON. 'Sir, it is in the intellectual world as in the physical world: we are told by natural philosophers that a body is at rest in the place that is fit for it; they who are content to live in the country, are *fit* for the country.'"

But in such passages as this, and the extract from Pope's letter which I quote later,[1] we see that what the intellectuals of that age disliked in a country life was the mental isolation and consequent stagnation which it involved.

In that age, before the country had been invested with mystical or metaphysical significance, before a sense of natural beauty had been reborn in England, the country was to many merely the abode of dullness, for the vast majority of the country's intellectuals

[1] *Vide infra*, p. 177.

had been drawn to London, as Johnson on another occasion pointed out:

"The happiness of London is not to be conceived but by those who have been in it. I will venture to say, there is more learning and science within the circumference of ten miles from where we now sit, than in all the rest of the kingdom."

In the estimation of the majority of Town wits and scholars the country in the eighteenth century was doubtless of little importance; but, on the other hand, evidence is not lacking that beyond this circle were many who found in the country, then as always, beauty and peace, and experienced the rest and refreshment of spirit which these can give. When we remember the difficulties, dangers and discomforts of travel in those days, the bad roads, the robbers, the mental and physical isolation which country residence so often entailed, we may conclude that the average educated person of the eighteenth century liked the country as much, or as little, as the average educated person of any other age.

At any rate the extraordinary unanimity with which the poets of the time agree in praising a country life as the highest happiness attainable is a remarkable and indisputable fact. For several reasons, however, the critic must hesitate before taking it at its face value, and regarding it as evidence of a widespread appreciation of the country.

In the first place, the poets who were imitative rather than original found, both in their beloved classics and in earlier English poetry, verses which praised country life as the highest kind of human happiness, and so

tempted them to echo the songs of their predecessors. Such verses as Horace's Second Epode and Martial's verses to Fronto[1] and to Julius Martialis,[2] called them to emulation, especially in an age which looked to Rome for its models. In England Cowley, whose irregular Pindarics had set a popular fashion, had also followed in the footsteps of Horace and Martial as a rhapsodist of country life. Everywhere in his prose as well as in his verse we find him describing a cultured life in rustic retirement as the ideal of human happiness. Whether he writes essays in prose "of" Liberty, Solitude, Agriculture, or Gardens, or writes verses, the general idea expressed is that of the following opening passage in *The Garden*:—

"I never had any other desire so strong, and so like to covetousness as that one which I have had always, that I might be master at last of a small house and large garden, with very moderate conveniences joined to them, and there dedicate the remainder of my life only to the culture of them and study of Nature."

"As far as my memory can return back into my past life, before I knew or was capable of guessing what the world, or glories, or business of it were" (he writes in the essay *Of Myself*,) "the natural affections of my soul gave me a secret bent of aversion from them, as some plants are said to turn away from others, by an antipathy imperceptible to themselves, and inscrutable to man's understanding. Even when I was a very young boy at school, instead of running about on holidays and playing with my fellows, I was wont to steal from them, and walk into the fields, either alone with a book,

[1] I. 55. [2] X. 47.

or with some one companion, if I could find any of the same temper."

This disposition, influenced by his reading of Horace, led him while but a boy of thirteen years to write the following *Ode*, which he quotes to show "that I was then of the same mind as I am now":

"This only grant me, that my means may lye
Too low for envy, for contempt too high.
Some honour I would have,
Not from great deeds, but good alone;
The unknown are better than ill known.
Rumour can ope the grave,
Acquaintance I would have, but when't depends
Not on the number, but the choice of friends.

Books should, not business, entertain the light,
And sleep as undisturbed as death the night.
My house a cottage, more
Than palace, and should fitting be
For all my use, no luxury.
My garden painted o'er
With Nature's hand, not Art's; and pleasures yield,
Horace might envy in his Sabine field.

Thus would I double my life's fading space,
For he that runs it well, twice runs his race.
And in this true delight,
These unbought sports, this happy state,
I would not fear nor wish my fate,
But boldly say each night,
To-morrow let my sun his beams display,
Or in clouds hide them; I have lived to-day."

As a man Cowley, despite his courtier environment, renewed in the following verses the wish of his boyhood's days:—

"Ah, yet, ere I descend to the grave,
May I a small house, and large garden have!
And a few friends, and many books, both true,
Both wise, and both delightful too!
And since love ne'er will from me flee,
A mistress moderately fair
And good as guardian angels are,
Only beloved, and loving me!

Oh, fountains, when in you shall I
Myself, eased of unpeaceful thoughts, espy?
Oh, fields! Oh, woods! when, when shall I be made
The happy tenant of your shade?
Here's the spring-head of Pleasure's flood;
Where all the riches lie, that she
Has coined and stamped for good."

The spirit expressed in the two stanzas I have selected inspires the whole poem, and the influence of Martial as well as of Horace is shown by Cowley's translation of the former's verses to Julius Martialis, which he gives immediately afterwards.

The direct influence of the classics and of those earlier English poets who had expressed this same conception of ideal happiness accounts therefore in great measure for this poetic expression of a cultured and leisured life in the country as the *summum bonum* of human existence.

One other element obviously played a part in this desire. The town-dweller has always placed absolute felicity in the country—so long as the country has possessed for him the charm of the unknown. Here as ever *omne ignotum pro magnifico*. Just as the sophisticated courtiers and coffee-house habitués delighted to fancy themselves shepherds and shepherdesses, inventing

artificial pastorals in a passing reaction against their own urban environment, so they (whether of ancient Rome or eighteenth-century London) were ready to play with imaginary desires for a rural life. In the following poem by Henry Carey this spirit is clearly shown :—

Mrs Stuart's Retirement

From the Court to the Cottage convey me away,
For I'm weary of grandeur and what they call " gay,"
Where pride without measure,
And pomp without pleasure,
Make life, in a circle of hurry, decay.

Far remote and retired from the noise of the Town,—
I'll exchange my brocade for a plain russet gown.
My friends shall be few,
But well chosen and true,
And sweet recreation our evening shall crown.

With a rural repast, a rich banquet to me,
On a mossy green bank, near some shady old tree,
The river's clear brink
Shall afford me my drink ;
And Temp'rance my friendly physician shall be.

Ever calm and serene, with contentment still blest,
Not too giddy with joy, or with sorrow deprest,
I'll neither invoke
Nor repine at Death's stroke,
But retire from the world as I would to my rest.

Nevertheless, outside the Town and town circles (occasionally, too, within them) were to be found men and women who sincerely loved that exquisite countryside of eighteenth-century England, then the quiet home of beauty which still lives in the works of Wilson and Gainsborough, Westall and Constable.

John Scott, amidst the beauty of Amwell, obviously expresses sincere and intimate feeling (despite the "nymph Delia" who was his wife) when he writes:

"Why asks my friend what cheers the passing day,
Where those lone fields my rural home inclose;
That me no scenes the pompous city shows
Lure from that rural residence away?

Now through my laurel groves I musing stray,
Now breathe the gale that o'er the lilac blows,
Now in my grotto's solemn cells repose,
Or down the smooth vale wind at evening grey;

Now charms the lofty poet's tuneful lay,
Where music fraught with fair instruction flows;
Now Delia's converse makes the moments gay,
The nymph for love and innocence I chose:
O Friend! the man who joys like these can taste
On vice and folly needs no hour to waste."

But whether merely written to suit the passing whims of courtiers and town-dwellers, or for sincere lovers of rural life, these poems express no mystical or abstract love of Nature, but are in complete accord with the common-sense character of the age. What they desired, or pretended to desire, was a good fortune, a comfortable country house, a pleasant garden, a well-chosen library, a few delightful friends, sometimes also a faithful wife—and the perfect content which these must bring. To an age of common sense with a keen perception of reality, the very limitations of these practical ideals made them the more attractive by making them the more attainable. Indeed, in the affirmation of its very modest desire the age is no less insistent than in the great negation which reason

inspired. Perhaps it was really but a complementary part of that negative attitude to existence.

Refusing, in general, to look beyond the barriers of this world, they turned their eyes to contemplate the close of their present state, and laid schemes to ensure as far as possible that the act which immediately preceded the fall of the curtain should be a fitting one—elegant, pleasing, polite—the best indeed that culture and common sense could produce. They at any rate desired a happy eventide of life amidst the modest comforts of a charming country cottage, free from the sordid cares and inconveniences of poverty, cheered by the company of a few faithful and congenial friends, refined by study of the best writers of the ancient and modern worlds.

Again and again in the poetry of the eighteenth century we find this desire for a radiant and peaceful sunset to close the labours of life's unquiet day. They knew quite clearly the best that life can offer, and as wise men they did not hesitate in their choice. He must be a stern moralist and enthusiast for action who would quarrel with their tremulous desire to "make a good end."

Most of these poems are entitled *The Wish* or *Content*, or bear some similar name, and all are alike in spirit. Almost every poet and poetaster of the time recorded his conception of earthly felicity in one of these poems.

Here is a typical one by Josiah Relph:

The Poet's Petition

If Phœbus his poet's petition would crown,
I'd ask a retreat in a snug country town,
Near which a clear stream in a valley should glide,
With fountains and meadows and groves by its side;

And then my ambition no farther should stray,
But to better my life, and to better my lay,
To virtue's improvement, and vice's decay.

A competent fortune should be my next call,
Too great for contempt, and for envy too small;
I would work, not for need, but my fancy to please,
With various enjoyment of labour and ease.

A friend of like temper and honesty tried,
Should double my joys and my sorrows divide,
But far from my cottage let beauty remove,
Nor poison my innocent pleasures with love.

At town I or seldom or never would come,
Unless when no subject of satire's at home;
Or (since sweetest pleasures the soonest will cloy)
To give a new relish to surfeiting joy.

And when those dear pleasures no more shall be mine,
Not weary with life, nor yet loath to resign,
In death I would gently dissolve as in rest,
And this epitaph should be wrote in each breast:
The poet's ambition no farther did stray,
But to better his life, and better his lay,
To virtue's improvement, and vice's decay.

Three years before the close of the seventeenth century Walter Pope had followed in Cowley's footsteps by writing:

The Old Man's Wish

The old man, he doth wish for wealth in vain;
But he doth not the treasure gain:
For if with wishes he the same could have,
He would not mind, nor think upon, the grave!

If I live to grow old, (for I find I go down !)
Let this be my fate in a country town !
Let me have a warm house, with a stone at the gate ;
And a cleanly young girl to rub my bald pate !
May I govern my passion with an absolute sway !
And grow wiser and better as my strength wears away,
Without gout or stone, by a gentle decay ! [1]

In a country town, by a murmuring brook,
The ocean at distance on which I may look ;
With a spacious plain, without hedge or stile,
And an easy pad-nag to ride out a mile.

With a pudding on Sunday, and stout humming liquor,
And remnants of Latin to puzzle the vicar ;
With a hidden reserve of Burgundy wine,
To drink the King's health as oft as I dine.

With Plutarch, and Horace, and one or two more
Of the best wits that lived in the ages before ;
With a dish of roast mutton, not venison, nor teal,
And clean, though coarse, linen at every meal.

And if I should have guests, I must add to my wish,
On Fridays, a mess of good buttered fish !
For, full well I do know, and the truth I reveal,
I had better do so, than come short of a meal !

With breeches and jerkin of good country grey,
And live without working, now my strength doth decay ;
With a hogshead of Sherry, for to drink when I please ;
With friends to be merry, and to live at my ease.

Without molestation, may I spend my last days
In sweet recreation, and sound forth the praise
Of all those that are true to the King and his laws !
Since it be their due they shall have my applause !

[1] The final three lines repeat after each stanza.

When the days are grown short and it freezes and snows,
May I have a coal fire as high as my nose!
A fire which, once stirred up with a prong,
Will keep the room temperate all the night long.

With courage undaunted may I face the last day;
And, when I am dead, may the better sort say,
In the morning, when sober, in the evening, when
mellow:
"He is gone, and has left not behind him his fellow!
For he governed his passion with an absolute sway!
And grew wiser and better, as his strength wore
away,
Without gout or stone, by a gentle decay."

In 1699 John Pomfret expressed a similar ambition in *The Choice*, a poem which brought its author so much fame that even as late as the opening of the nineteenth century Southey asks: "Why is Pomfret the most popular of the English poets? The fact is certain and the solution would be useful."

The answer is, probably, that, although no poet, Pomfret succeeded in expressing quite clearly a very general feeling of the time. The poem is too long to quote in full, but the following extracts show how closely Pomfret follows in the wake of Cowley:—

"If Heaven the grateful liberty would give,
That I might choose my method how to live:
And all those hours propitious fate should lend,
In blissful ease, and satisfaction spend,
Near some fair town I'd have a private seat,
Built uniform, not little nor too great;
Better if on a rising ground it stood;
On this side fields, on that a neighbouring wood.

It should within no other things contain,
But what are useful, necessary, plain:
Methinks 'tis nauseous; and I'd ne'er endure
The needless pomp of gaudy furniture."

He then proceeds to describe the other amenities which he desires, to make this retreat ideally happy:

"A little garden, grateful to the eye;
And a cool rivulet run murmuring by:
On whose delicious banks a stately row
Of shady limes or sycamores should grow."

At the end of this avenue there should be a "silent study" containing the best of Latin literature, Horace, Virgil, Juvenal, Ovid:

"With all those moderns, men of steady sense,
Esteemed for learning, and for eloquence."

These he would read every morning. A small competence to enable him to live "genteelly but not great," to entertain an occasional friend without inconvenience, and to relieve the poor. He would also have good but plain fare on his table, "a frugal plenty," "enough to satisfy," with something left over for the poor. Good wine, but no drunkenness, he would have, for

"What freedom prudence, and right reason give,
All men may, with impunity, receive:
But the least swerving from their rule's too much;
For what's forbidden us, 'tis death to touch."

He would choose also two friends,

"That life may be more comfortable yet,
And all my joys refined, sincere, and great."

They must be well born, of kindred humour to himself, discreet, have known men as well as books, be brave,

generous, witty, and neither loose nor formal in conduct. Nor are these demands enough, for the poet proceeds to add other essential qualities which they must possess —obligingness, frankness,

> "Brisk in gay talking, and in sober, grave;
> Close in dispute, but not tenacious; tried
> By solid reason, and let that decide."

Another desire (and one which brought the ecclesiastical poet into trouble, for his enemies soon used the lines to bring a charge of advocating immorality against him) he expressed thus:

> "Would bounteous Heaven once more indulge,
> I'd choose
> (For who would so much satisfaction lose,
> As witty nymphs in conversation give)
> Near some obliging, modest fair to live:
> For there's that sweetness in a female mind
> Which in a man's we cannot hope to find;
> That, by a secret, but a powerful art,
> Winds up the spring of life, and does impart
> Fresh vital heat to the transported heart."

He then gives us a sketch of his ideal of womanhood, beginning of course with the "reasonable" element in her character:

> "I'd have her reason all her passions sway;
> Easy in company, in private gay;
> Coy to a fop, to the deserving free;
> Still constant to herself and just to me."

The description of her other qualities includes courage, quickness in decision, speech not too reserved nor yet too free, "regular conduct" and "refined mirth," civility to strangers, kindness to neighbours.

Without "vanity, revenge and pride," free from deceit, faithful in friendship, good to all, such must be this inimitable lady whom he demands of heaven.

Then follow the indiscreet lines which poor Pomfret failed to see might become a weapon against himself:

"To this fair creature I'd sometimes retire;
Her conversation would new joys inspire;
Give life an edge so keen, no surly care
Would venture to assault my soul, or dare,
Near my retreat, to hide one secret snare.
But so divine, so noble a repast,
I'd seldom, and with moderation, taste:
For highest cordials all their virtues lose,
By a too frequent and too bold a use;
And what would cheer the spirits in distress,
Ruins our health when taken to excess."

These lines, taken in conjunction with the passage quoted below, in which Pomfret (who was married) rejects the thought of taking a wife, formed the case of his enemies against him.

Incautious language certainly, and a great gift for a clergyman seeking preferment, to make to his enemies.

In the final section of the poem he tells us how he would avoid lawsuits, would do all he could for his king and his country, and concludes thus:

"If Heaven a date of many years would give,
Thus I'd in pleasure, ease, and plenty live.
And as I near approached the verge of life,
Some kind relation (for I'd have no wife)
Should take upon him all my worldly care,
Whilst I did for a better state prepare.
Then I'd not be with any trouble vexed,
Nor have the evening of my days perplexed;

But by a silent and a peaceful death,
Without a sigh, resign my aged breath.
And when committed to the dust, I'd have
Few tears, but friendly, dropt into my grave,
Then would my exit so propitious be,
All men would wish to live and die like me."

Throughout the century many writers follow Cowley and Pomfret in praising this state of felicity as the highest happiness life affords. Dr Johnson's summary of *The Choice* in his *Life of Pomfret* shows how general was the spirit it expressed:

"His *Choice* exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions and equal to common expectations; such a state as affords plenty and tranquillity, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures. Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's *Choice*."

Another literary model for this kind of verse was Pope's early *Ode on Solitude*, of which frank imitations were made:

THE WISH

Written in imitation of Mr Pope's "Ode on Solitude"

Grant me, ye Powers, some blest retreat,
Bedecked with kind embowering shade,
Where murmuring waters, clear and sweet,
Refresh the shade.

Where on his airy pinions borne,
Cool Zephyr sports among the trees,
There let me sit at rising morn
To think at ease.

Around upon th'enamelled plain
Let Flora plant her choicest flowers:
Whilst the gay skylark with his strain
Beguiles the hours.

At distance show the fruitful fields,
Where the wise swain contentment learns,
Where Ceres her ripe treasure yields
To stock my barns.

Grant me an orchard too, and cot
Where plenty without pomp presides:
While near my little chosen spot
A river glides.

Here let me all my life employ;
Happy beyond the reach of care,
And to complete my boundless joy,
Bring Sylvia there![1]

Other poets who ask for a tranquil mind and dormant passions amid rustic beauty are Mrs Barber in lines *By a Person of Quality*, Henry Baker in *The Petition*, Mary Chandler in *My Wish*, James Love in *The Wish*, to mention but a few.

Robert Dodsley, once footman, then publisher, and author of *The Muse in Livery*, wrote in that volume a poem, "The Wish," in which he sings:

"Might I a small estate possess,
Sufficient to supply
My wants, and keep me from distress,
From scorn and infamy;
Content with this, ye Gods, I'd ask no more:
But oh, 'tis wretched to be *very poor*.

[1] Anon.

My house convenient, warm and neat,
But very small should be;
Room just to study, sleep and eat,
Is full enough for me:
And but so far from London let it stand,
As that its noise and hurry mayn't offend."

He then continues with the usual petition, asking for a little garden with a "Jessamin" arbour for reading and thinking, a good library, friends, and

"A wife young, virtuous, fair and kind."

With two better-known examples of this kind of verse I will leave it. The first is by John Collins:

"In the downhill of life when I find I'm declining,
May my fate no less fortunate be,
Than a snug elbow-chair will afford for reclining,
And a cot that o'erlooks the wide sea;
With an ambling pad pony to pace o'er the lawn,
While I carol away idle sorrow,
And, blithe as the lark that each day hails the dawn,
Look forward with hope for to-morrow.

With a porch at my door, both for shelter and shade, too,
As the sunshine or rain may prevail;
And a small spot of ground for the use of the spade, too,
With a barn for the use of the flail:
A cow for the dairy, a dog for my game,
And a purse when a friend wants to borrow,
I'll envy no Nabob his riches or fame,
Or what honours may wait him to-morrow.

From the bleak northern blast may my cot be completely
Secured by a neighbouring hill;
And at night may repose steal upon me more sweetly
By the sound of a murmuring rill:

And while peace and plenty I find at my board,
With a heart free from sickness and sorrow,
With my friends let me share what to-day may afford,
And let them spread the table to-morrow.

And when I at last must throw off this frail cov'ring,
Which I've worn for threescore years and ten,
On the brink of the grave I'll not seek to keep hov'ring,
Nor my thread wish to spin o'er again;
But my face in the glass I'll serenely survey,
And with smiles count each wrinkle and furrow,
As this old worn-out stuff, which is threadbare to-day,
May become everlasting to-morrow."

The last of these "wishes" is *A Wish* by Samuel Rogers, probably the best known of all, but not to be omitted here:

"Mine be a cot beside the hill;
A bee-hive's hum shall soothe my ear;
A willowy brook, that turns a mill,
With many a fall shall linger near.

The swallow, oft, beneath my thatch,
Shall twitter from her clay-built nest;
Oft shall the pilgrim lift the latch,
And share my meal, a welcome guest.

Around my ivied porch shall spring
Each fragrant flower that drinks the dew;
And Lucy, at her wheel, shall sing,
In russet gown and apron blue.

The village church, among the trees,
Where first our marriage vows were given,
With merry peal shall swell the breeze,
And point with taper spire to Heaven."

Sometimes this ideal of human happiness is presented not as a wish, but either as praise of some

abstraction, Content or Happiness, or of some representative person, as in the following poem by Anthony Hammond:—

THE HAPPY MAN

A plain, good man without deceit,
Whose virtues only make him great,
Whose learning does to wisdom tend,
Whose wisdom does in goodness end;
Contented with the humble state
In which he's placed by choice or fate,
To a few honest, wise men known,
For ill or folly taxed by none;
One who with prudence does enjoy
Pleasures which fill but never cloy;
Pleasures above gross sense refined,
A true, dear friend, a serious mind,
A constant health, a fair, kind wife,
Books, quiet, and a country life,
Thus before age comes on, to fall:
Pleased in himself and praised by all.

Ideal happiness for the eighteenth century lies not in struggle, or adventure, or the perfecting of one's labours, nor does it lie amidst the pleasures and gaieties of social life—it is to be found only in a contented mind; and that to them means a passive rather than an active, a receptive rather than a creative, life.

CONTENT: A SONG

Lovely, lasting Peace of Mind
  Gently soothe my soul to rest;
In thy soft balm relief we find
  To heal the sorrow-wounded breast;
'Tis thou canst tune my soul to peace,
And make each jarring passion cease.

Sweet Content! thou dear delight,
Thou sovereign cordial for our woes;
Thou mak'st our cares and burdens light,
From thee incessant sweetness flows.
From envy, pride, and discord free,
We here enjoy a heaven in thee.[1]

Henry Baker writes in similar vein:

"Give me, O God! (for all things come from thee)
Content, that richest cordial of the soul:
Possessing this, I happier shall be,
In my neglected, low degree,
Than he who does in heaps of riches roll.
Chymists, long in vain, have sought
The philosophic stone to find,
What labour had been spared! if they had thought
To look for't where it is, in a contented mind."

Again and again we find such poems as this amongst the works of the eighteenth-century poets, for surely never before or since was there such uniformity of thought in English verse; perhaps that is another way of saying, such a lack of originality.

An occasional poet desires something other than the popular, rural paradise. Pessimists indeed there are who desire, or pretend, or believe they desire, only a swift removal from the unhappiness of life. Such was John Hughes, who wrote the following:—

A Wish—to the New Year, 1705

Janus! great leader of the rolling year,
Since all that's past, no vows can e'er restore,
But joys and griefs alike, once hurried o'er,
No longer now deserve a smile or tear,

[1] Mrs Jane Brereton.

Close the fantastic scenes—but grace
With brightest aspects thy foreface,
While Time's new offspring hastens to appear.
With lucky omens guide the coming hours,
Command the circling seasons to advance,
And form their renovated dance,
With flowing pleasures fraught, and blessed by friendly powers.

Thy month, O Janus, gave me first to know
A mortal's trifling cares below;
My race of life began with thee.
Thus far, from great misfortunes free,
Contented, I my lot endure,
Nor Nature's rigid laws arraign,
Nor spurn at common ills in vain,
Which folly cannot shun, nor wise reflexion cure.

But oh!—more anxious for the year to come,
I would foreknow my future doom.
Then tell me, Janus, canst thou spy
Events that yet in embryo lie
For me, in Time's mysterious womb?
Tell me—nor shall I dread to hear
A thousand accidents severe;
I'll fortify my soul the load to bear,
If love rejected add not to its weight,
To finish me in woes, and crush me down with fate.

But if the Goddess, in whose charming eyes,
More clearly written than in Fate's dark book,
My joy, my grief, my all of future fortune lies,
If she must with a less propitious look
Forbid my humble sacrifice,
Or blast me with a killing frown,
If, Janus, this thou seest in store,

Cut short my mortal thread, and now
Take back the gift thou didst bestow!
Here let me lay my burden down,
And cease to love in vain, and be a wretch no more.

Another "wish," a very melancholy one, was written by Jabez Hughes, the younger brother of the poet last mentioned:

The Wish

Ye Powers who sway the skies above,
The load of mortal life remove:
I cannot, labouring thus, sustain
Th'excessive burthen of my pain!
A dance of Pleasures, hurrying by,
Enduring griefs, a glimpse of joy,
With blessings of a brittle kind,
Inconstant, shifting as the wind,
Are all your suppliant has known
Since first his lingering race begun.
In pity, then, pronounce my fate,
And here conclude my shortened date;
'Tis all I ask you, to bestow
A safe retreat from future woe!

Here indeed is a contrast to the oft-reiterated "wishes" of the more robust versifiers of the eighteenth century. We are reminded of Burton's comment on the victims of melancholy:

"In other diseases there is some hope likely, but these unhappy men are born to misery, past all hope of recovery, incurably sick, the longer they live the worse they are, and death alone must ease them."

The general desire for that content which obscurity alone can give naturally found expression in

pastorals such as the following, *Invitation*, by William Richardson :—

"Fair Lady! leave parade and show!
O, leave thy courtly guise a while!
For thee the vernal breezes blow,
And groves and flowery valleys smile.

. . . . . .

O, Lady! change thy splendid state!
With us a shepherdess abide!
Contentment dwells not with the great,
But flies from avarice and pride.

The groves invite thee, and our vale,
Where every fragrant bud that blows,
And every stream and every gale
Will yield thee pastime and repose."

Merrick, in *The Wish*, asks only for the content of a happy mediocrity :

"How short is life's uncertain space!
Alas! how quickly done!
How swift the wild precarious chase!
And yet how difficult the race!
How very hard to run!

. . . . . .

Since then false joys our fancy cheat
With hopes of real bliss,
Ye guardian powers that rule my fate,
The only wish that I create
Is all comprised in this :

May I through life's uncertain tide
Be still from pain exempt;
May all my wants be still supplied,
My state too low t'admit of pride,
And yet above contempt!"

There in vicissitude is the thorn in the rose of life that so pricks the eighteenth century—either to tears and piety or to complete defiance such as Chesterfield's :

"Let us be cheerful whilst we can,
And lengthen out the short-lived span,
Enjoying every hour.
The moon itself we see decay,
Beauty's the worse for every day,
And so's the sweetest flower."

But more congenial than these to the present-day reader is the verse of John Dyer, author of the exquisite *Grongar Hill*, who in *An Epistle to a Friend in Town* gives us the love of tranquil beauty combined with a more active, more vigorous, love of life :

"Have my friends in the town, in the gay, busy town,
Forgot such a man as John Dyer?
Or heedless despise they, or pity the clown
Whose bosom no pageantries fire?

No matter, no matter ;—content in the shades—
(Contented?—why, everything charms me)
Fall in tunes all adown the green steep, ye cascades,
Till hence rigid virtue alarms me.

Till outrage arises, or misery needs
The swift, the intrepid avenger ;
Till sacred religion or liberty bleeds,
Then mine be the deed, and the danger.

Alas ! what a folly, what wealth and domain
We heap up in sin and in sorrow !
Immense is the toil, yet the labour how vain !
Is not life to be over to-morrow?

Then glide on my moments, the few that I have,
Smooth-shaded, and quiet, and even;
While gently the body descends to the grave,
And the spirit arises to heaven."

I have said enough of these expressions of the desire for happiness in the eighteenth century to show, I think, that here too was a contemplative, rather than an active, attitude to life. In conclusion I will quote one of the most pleasing of the many poems relating to this question. It is by John Hawkesworth, and is entitled *A Moral Thought*:

"Through groves sequestered, dark and still,
Low vales and mossy cells among,
In silent paths the careless rill,
With languid murmurs, steals along:

Awhile it plays with circling sweep,
And lingering leaves its native plain,
Then pours impetuous down the steep,
And mingles with the boundless main.

O let my years thus devious glide,
Through silent scenes obscurely calm,
Nor wealth nor strife pollute the tide,
Nor honour's sanguinary palm.

When labour tires, and pleasure palls,
Still let the stream untroubled be,
As down the steep of age it falls,
And mingles with eternity."

V

NATURE

I ask not Fortune's glittering charms,
The pride of courts, the spoils of arms;
By silver stream and haunted grove,
O give my peaceful steps to rove:
Beneath the shade of pendent hills,
I'll listen to the falling rills,
That chase the pebble, as they stray;
And haste, like human life, away.

Dr Marriot (?).

That the eighteenth century in its own realistic, common-sense way appreciated nature in general has been shown to some extent in treating of its conception of ideal happiness as a cultured life in rural retirement. But if we come down to details we find here, too, many poems showing observation of, and interest in, nature.

Throughout the century that type of poetry which Johnson termed "local poetry," poetry fashioned after the manner of Denham's *Cooper's Hill*, was popular. We cannot as a whole call it "lyrical," either in spirit or in form, but at times, as in its choicest production, Dyer's *Grongar Hill*, the lyric note is distinctly heard, while the whole of this local poetry, good and bad, does at anyrate show an interest in natural beauty.

Nor, when we talk of the love of the Town, and of the influence of the coffee-houses upon the writers of the time, must we forget that outside those circles of wit and

social pleasures were many minor writers who, living in the quietude of eighteenth-century rural England, loved Nature as men in all ages have loved her, and tried (sometimes successfully) to express in simple and sincere language the joy she gave.

The Rev. Thomas Fitzgerald has contrasted the pleasures of town and country, and expressed the desire to escape from the whirl and noise of the one into the peace and rest of the other:

"No! No! 'Tis in vain, in this turbulent Town,
To expect either pleasure or rest!
To hurry and nonsense still tying us down,
'Tis an overgrown prison at best!

From hence, to the country escaping away,
Leave the crowd and the bustle behind!
And there you'll see liberal Nature display
A thousand delights to Mankind!

The change of the seasons, the sports of the fields,
The sweetly diversified scene,
The groves, and the gardens;—nay! everything yields
A happiness ever serene!

Here, here, from ambition and avarice free,
My days may I quietly spend!
Whilst the cits and the courtiers, unenvied by me,
May gather up wealth without end!

No! I thank them! I'll never, to add to my store,
My peace and my freedom resign!
For who, for the sake of possessing the ore,
Would be sentenced to dig in the mine?"

In the following anonymous song, taken from *The Musical Miscellany* of 1729, we find this same appreciation of the country:—

The Country Life

Happy is a country life! Happy is a country life!
Blest with content, good health and ease,
Free from factions, noise and strife,
We only plot ourselves to please.
Peace of mind's our day's delight,
And love, or welcome dreams, at night.
Peace of mind's our day's delight,
And love, or welcome dreams, at night.
Hail! green fields, and shady woods!
Hail! crystal streams that still run pure,
Nature's uncorrupted goods,
Where virtue only dwells secure;
Free from vice and free from care,
Age has no pain, nor youth a snare.

At times, in poems not specifically written about the country, the love of Nature is an all-pervading influence, as in the once famous poem, *Arno's Vale*, by Charles, the 2nd Duke of Dorset:

"When here, Lucinda, first we came,
Where Arno rolls his silver stream,
How blithe the nymphs, the swains how gay,
Content inspired each rural lay.
The birds in livelier concert sung,
The grapes in thicker clusters hung;
All looked as joy could never fail
Among the sweets of Arno's Vale.

But since the good Palemon died,
The chief of shepherds and their pride,
Now Arno's sons must all give place
To northern men, an iron race.

The taste of pleasure now is o'er,
Thy notes, Lucinda, please no more;
The Muses droop, the Goths prevail;
Adieu the sweets of Arno's Vale."[1]

Nichols has preserved for us in his collection of poetry an *Ode to Morning* by Miss Pennington, who was the daughter of the rector of Huntingdon, and died in 1759, when only twenty-five years of age:

"Hail roseate Morn! returning light!
To thee the sable Queen of Night
Reluctant yields her sway;
And, as she quits the dappled skies,
On glories, greater glories rise,
To greet the dawning day.

O'er tufted meads gay Flora trips;
Arabia's spices scent her lips;
Her head with rose-buds crowned;
Mild Zephyr hastes to snatch a kiss,
And, fluttering with the transient bliss,
Wafts fragrance all around."

After much stilted description of "broidered vales," "blooming flowers" and "vernal breezes," we have the concluding stanzas with a final touch of moralising verse:

"Shall I, with drowsy poppies crowned
By sleep in silken fetters bound,
The downy God obey?
Ah, no!—Through your embowering grove,
Or winding valley, let me rove,
And own thy cheerful sway.

[1] Written at Florence on the death of the last Grand Duke of Tuscany of the Medici family.

For short-lived are thy pleasing powers;
Pass but a few uncertain hours,
And we no more shall trace
Thy dimpled cheek and brow serene;
Or clouds may gloom the smiling scene,
And frowns deform thy face.

So in life's youthful, bloomy prime,
We sport away the fleeting time,
Regardless of our fate;
But, by some unexpected blow,
Our giddy follies we shall know,
And mourn them when too late."

Not exalted verse, though possibly "sublime," but interesting as a typical example of the "effusions" produced by poetical ladies of that time. Let us turn to something better—Smollett's

Ode to Leven Water

On Leven's banks, while free to rove,
And tune the rural pipe to love,
I envied not the happiest swain
That ever trod the Arcadian plain.

Pure stream in whose transparent wave
My youthful limbs I wont to lave,
No torrents stain thy limpid source;
No rocks impede thy dimpling course,
That sweetly warbles o'er its bed,
With white, round, polished pebbles spread;
While, lightly poised, the scaly brood
In myriads cleave thy crystal flood;
The springing trout in speckled pride;
The salmon, monarch of the tide;
The ruthless pike, intent on war;
The silver eel and mottled parr.

Devolving from thy parent lake,
A charming maze thy waters make,
By bowers of birch and groves of pine,
And edges flowered with eglantine.

Still on thy banks so gaily green
May numerous herds and flocks be seen,
And lasses chanting o'er the pail,
And shepherds piping in the dale,
And ancient faith that knows no guile,
And industry embrowned with toil,
And hearts resolved, and hands prepared,
The blessings they enjoy to guard.

Nor are all the poets of that practical age like the persons of whom Nicholas Rowe speaks when he says:

"—Some who have the stars surveyed
Are ignorantly led
To think those glorious lamps were made
To light Tom Fool to bed."

George Stepney may sin in this way, but at any rate he has left us an acceptable poem, "Englished from a Greek Idyllium":

To the Evening Star

Bright star! by Venus fixed above,
To rule the happy realms of Love,
Who in the dewy rear of day,
Advancing thy distinguished ray,
Dost other lights as far outshine
As Cynthia's silver glories thine;
Known by superior beauty there,
As much as Pastorella here.

Exert, bright star, thy friendly light,
And guide me through the dusky night!

Defrauded of her beams, the moon
Shines dim, and will be vanished soon.
I would not rob the shepherd's fold;
I seek no miser's hoarded gold;
To find a nymph I'm forced to stray,
Who lately stole my heart away.

Johnson could find nothing to praise in Stepney's poetry, but as these verses won a place for themselves in his own time, and maintained it until the early years of the next century, they are interesting not only in themselves but also as an indication of the taste of the period.

As we might expect in a realistic age, those singers who love the country give us in detail from time to time a particular, limited aspect of nature, or of the life of man in the country.

Johnson said it was not the province of the poet to "number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades of the verdure of the forest"; nevertheless poetry was, very rightly, gradually approaching such forbidden exercises, as artists came to realise that even if generalised truth were the aim of poetry it must nevertheless be presented in the concrete if poetry were to retain its life and power. Cowper was the most important of the early leaders in this tendency towards close observation and realistic detail in descriptions of nature, but many smaller poets show it in varying degrees:

"Ere yet the russet foliage fall
I'll climb the mountain's brow,
My friend, my Hayman,[1] at thy call,
To view the scene below:

[1] Francis Hayman, the painter.

How sweetly pleasing to behold
Forests of vegetable gold!
How mixed the many-chequered shades between—
The tawny mellowing hue, and the gay, vivid green!

How splendid all the sky! how still!
How mild the dying gale!
How soft the whispers of the rill
That winds along the dale!
So tranquil Nature's works appear,
It seems the Sabbath of the year;
As if, the Summer's labour past, she chose
This season's sober calm for blandishing repose."[1]

It is interesting to notice in such verse of trite moralising over nature the development throughout the latter part of the century of a mood that afterwards, in much of the work of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, was to become that identification of man with nature which is now one of the most distinct features of our poetry. This gives interest to such poems as *The Invitation*, by James Barclay:

"Awake, my fair, the morning springs,
The dew-drops glance around,
The heifer lows, the blackbird sings,
The echoing vales resound.

The simple sweets would Stella taste
That breathing morning yields,
The fragrance of the flowery waste,
And freshness of the fields;

By uplands, and the greenwood-side,
We'll take our early way,
And view the valley spreading wide,
And opening with the day.

[1] Francis Fawkes, *Autumnal Ode*.

Nor uninstructive shall the scene
Unfold its charms in vain,
The fallow brown, the meadow green,
The mountain and the plain.

Each dew-drop glistening on the thorn,
And trembling to its fall,
Each blush that paints the cheek of morn,
In Fancy's ear shall call:

'O ye in Youth and Beauty's pride,
Who lightly dance along;
While Laughter frolics at your side,
And Rapture tunes your song,

What though each grace around you play,
Each beauty bloom for you,
Warm as the blush of rising day,
And sparkling as the dew;

The blush that glows so gaily now,
But glows to disappear;
And quivering from the bending bough,
Soon breaks the pearly tear.

So pass the beauties of your prime,
That e'en in blooming die;
So, shrinking at the blast of Time,
The treacherous graces fly.'

Let those, my Stella, slight the strain,
Who fear to find it true!
Each fair of transient beauty vain,
And youth as transient too."

It is in such jejune moralisings that nature and man for a moment meet in the eighteenth century. There is no identification of man with nature (except in a rare poem like Collins's elegy on Thomson), but it is in one sense only a step from deducing moral sentiments from

nature, to feeling nature's moral effect on the poet himself—yet between these two steps is a great gulf fixed, and to contrast the nature poems of the eighteenth century with those of their immediate successors is to discover how deep (if not wide) that gulf is.

It may be interesting here to add a poem that bridges the gulf, a poem previously mentioned, Beattie's *Hermit*:

" At the close of the day when the hamlet is still,
And mortals the sweets of forgetfulness prove;
When naught but the torrent is heard on the hill,
And naught but the nightingale's song in the grove;
'Twas then, by the cave of the mountain reclined,
A Hermit his nightly complaint thus began:
Though mournful his numbers, his soul was resigned;
He thought as a sage, though he felt as a man.

' Ah! why thus abandoned to darkness and woe?
Why thus, lonely Philomel, flows thy sad strain?
For spring shall return, and a lover bestow;
And thy bosom no trace of misfortune retain.
Yet if pity inspire thee, O cease not thy lay;
Mourn, sweetest companion, man calls thee to mourn:
O soothe him whose pleasures, like thine, pass away;—
Full quickly they pass but they never return!

' Now, gliding remote on the verge of the sky,
The moon, half extinct, a dim crescent displays;
But lately I marked, when majestic on high,
She shone, and the planets were lost in her blaze.
Roll on then, fair orb, and with gladness pursue
The path that conducts thee to splendour again.
But man's faded glory no change shall renew;
Ah! fool, to exult in a glory so vain!

'' 'Tis night, and the landscape is lovely no more;
I mourn, but, ye woodlands, I mourn not for you,
For morn is approaching, your charms to restore,
Perfumed with fresh fragrance and glittering with dew.
Nor yet for the ravage of Winter I mourn;
Kind Nature the embryo-blossom shall save.—
But when shall Spring visit the mouldering urn?
O when shall it dawn on the night of the grave!' "

The *Hermit* is a part of the sentimentalised "mediævalism" of the eighteenth century. But the touches of natural description and the sentimentality of the whole take us on towards Moore's *Morning of Life* and similar verses. "The mouldering urn" of Beattie is "the dark-flowing urn" of Moore — a significant resemblance, with an equally significant change. In the following stanza Moore's debt to his predecessor is obvious:—

"When we see the first glory of youth pass us by,
Like a leaf on the stream that will never return,
When our cup, which had sparkled with pleasure so high,
First tastes of the *other*, the dark-flowing urn;
Then, then is the time when affection holds sway
With a depth and a tenderness joy never knew;
Love, nursed among pleasures, is faithless as they,
But the love born of Sorrow, like Sorrow, is true."

Several early poems show how deeply this jingling music penetrated Byron in his youth:

"Yet the day may arrive when the mountains once more
Shall rise to my sight in their mantles of snow:
But while these soar above me, unchanged as before,
Will Mary be there to receive me?—ah, no!

Adieu, then, ye hills, where my childhood was bred!
Thou sweet-flowing Dee, to thy waters adieu!
No home in the forest shall shelter my head,—
Ah! Mary, what home could be mine but with you?"[1]

But I must return to the eighteenth century, for it is no part of my present purpose to suggest "influences."

In singing of nature these poets of the eighteenth century often find in birds a source of "inspiration," but in general their poems are far from preparing the way for Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, although the nightingale is sometimes the subject of their song. Indeed, in this connection, I cannot resist quoting a not very distant predecessor of Keats's *Ode*. It is by the once famous Cuthbert Shaw, and is entitled *An Evening Address to a Nightingale*. I do not propose to quote it in full. Let us begin with the first stanza:

"Sweet bird! that, kindly perching near,
Pourest thy plaints melodious in mine ear,
Not like base worldlings, tutored to forgo
The melancholy haunts of woe;
Thanks for thy sorrow-soothing strain:—
For, surely, thou hast known to prove,
Like me, the pangs of hopeless love;
Else why so feelingly complain,
And with thy pious notes thus sadden all the grove?"

After this invocation we are told the reason of the poet's sadness:

"Say, dost thou mourn thy ravished mate,
That oft enamoured on thy strains has hung?
Or has the cruel hand of Fate
Bereft thee of thy darling young?
Alas, for both, I weep—

[1] *When I roved, etc.*

In all the pride of youthful charms,
A beauteous bride torn from my circling arms!
A lovely babe that should have lived to bless,
And fill my doting eyes with frequent tears,
At once the source of rapture and distress,
The flattering prop of my declining years!
In vain from death to rescue I essayed,
By every art that science could devise,
Alas! it languished for a mother's aid,
And winged its flight to seek her in the skies.
Then, O our comforts be the same,
At evening's peaceful hour,
To shun the noisy paths of wealth and fame,
And breathe our sorrows in this lonely bower."

In such strains the poet sings of his own hard fate, and after dismissing the nightingale with the almost peevish complaint that it knows nothing of his own sorrow, and will find consolation in the following spring, while he must bear his woes to the tomb, he breaks forth into the following:—

"'Just Heaven,' I cried—with recent hopes elate,
'Yet I will live—will live, though Emma's dead—
So long bowed down beneath the storms of Fate,
Yet will I raise my woe-dejected head!
My little Emma, now my all,
Will want a father's care,
Her looks, her wants, my rash resolves recall,
And for her sake the ills of life I'll bear:
And oft together we'll complain,
Complaint, the only bliss my soul can know,
From me my child shall learn the mournful strain,
And prattle tales of woe.
And O in that auspicious hour,
When Fate resigns her persecuting power,

With duteous zeal her hand shall close,
No more to weep—my sorrow-streaming eyes,
When death gives misery repose,
And opes a glorious passage to the skies.'"

But this resolution is foiled by fate:

"Vain thought! it must not be.—She too is dead."

The poem was thought good enough to find a place in Pearch's *Collection*, which Keats must have seen.

Many other melancholy addresses to birds, such as "Mr Richardson's" *Ode to a Singing Bird*, appeared at this time. In this poem the disconsolate poetaster "of Queen's College, Oxon," demands:

"But why for thee this fond complaint?
Above thy master thou art blest:
Art thou not free?—Yes: calm Content
With olive sceptre sways thy breast."

And later, once more employing the rhetorical question so dear to these poets of sadness, he cries:

"Erewhile when brooding o'er my soul,
Frowned the black demons of Despair,
Did not thy voice that power control,
And oft suppress the rising tear?"

Again and again birds are used to teach a moral, as in the once well-known "elegies" by Richard Jago, *The Blackbirds* and *The Goldfinches*. An anonymous poem, *The Swallows*, in Dodsley, is also of this elegiac, moralising kind.

Joseph Giles, a friend of Shenstone and obviously influenced by him, wrote, in 1756, *The Robin, an Elegy*, which is, by virtue of its comparative shortness, suitable for quotation as an example of this kind of verse:

" O come, thou melancholy Muse,
With solemn dirge assist my strain,
While shades descend, and weeping dews
In sorrows wrap the rural plain.

Her mantle grave cool evening spreads,
The sun cuts short his joyful race;
The jocund hills, the laughing meads,
Put on a sickening, dying face.

Stern winter brings his gloomy train,
Each pleasing landskip fades from view;
In solemn state he shuts the scene,
To flowery fields we bid adieu!

Quite stript of every beauty, see
How soon fair Nature's honours fade!
The flowers are fled, each spreading tree
No more affords a grateful shade.

Their naked branches now behold,
Bare winds pierce through with murmuring sound;
Chilled by the Northern breezes cold,
Their leafy honours strew the ground.

So man, who treads life's active stage,
Like leaf or blossom fades away;
In tender youth, or riper age,
Drops thus into his native clay!

Alas! and can we choose but moan,
To see all Nature's charms expire!
Fair-blooming Spring, gay Summer gone,
And Autumn hastening to retire!

But see the tender Redbreast comes,
Forsaking now the leafless grove,
Hops o'er my threshold, pecks my crumbs,
And courts my hospitable love.

Then soothes me with his plaintive tale
As Sol withdraws his friendly ray;
Cheering, as evening shades prevail,
The soft remains of closing day.

O welcome to my homely board!
There unmolested shalt thou stand;
Were it with choicest dainties stored,
For thee I'd ope a liberal hand,

Since thou of all the warbling throng,
Who now in silence far retire,
Remain'st to soothe me with a song,
And many a pleasing thought inspire."

The following elegy by George Keate is not without charm:—

On the Death of a Linnet

Beneath this fragrant, woodbine's shade
A little songster's bones are laid;
Who, ever innocent and gay,
Felt all his hours glide smooth away;
No guilty passion tore his breast,
No dream of greatness broke his rest;
He with a cheerful patient mind
Played well that part the Gods assigned:
Nor matters it when this be done,
How soon the thread of life is spun!
Ye warbling tenants of the grove,
Approach this spot and mark your love;
Light hovering round on airy wing
Soft notes of plaintive friendship sing.
So may no prying eye pervade
The hedgerows where your young are laid;
Nor cruel hand of wanton boy
Your dwellings plunder or destroy:

Far may you bend your flight from where
The artful fowler spreads his snare,
And live from every danger free,
Enjoying still sweet liberty.

Another of Shenstone's friends, Richard Graves, was obviously a lover of birds, and he has left us a pleasing poem on them:

An Invitation to the Feathered Race

Again the balmy Zephyr blows,
Fresh verdure decks the grove,
Each bird with vernal rapture glows,
And tunes his notes to love.

Ye gentle warblers, hither fly,
And shun the noon-tide heat;
My shrubs a cooling shade supply,
My groves a safe retreat.

Here freely hop from spray to spray,
Or weave the mossy nest;
Here rove and sing the livelong day,
At night here sweetly rest.

Amidst this cool translucent rill,
That trickles down the glade,
Here bathe your plumes, here drink your fill,
And revel in the shade.

No school-boy rude, to mischief prone,
E'er shows his ruddy face,
Or twangs his bow, or hurls a stone,
In this sequestered place.

Hither the vocal Thrush repairs,
Secure the Linnet sings,
The Goldfinch dreads no slimy snares
To clog her painted wings.

Sad Philomel! ah, quit thy haunt
Yon distant woods among,
And round my friendly grotto chaunt
Thy sweetly-plaintive song.

Let not the harmless Redbreast fear,
Domestic bird, to come
And seek a sure asylum here,
With one that loves his home.

My trees for you, ye artless tribe,
Shall store of fruit preserve;
O let me thus your friendship bribe!
Come, feed without reserve.

For you these cherries I protect,
To you these plums belong;
Sweet is the fruit that you have picked,
But sweeter far your song.

Let then this league betwixt us made
Our mutual interests guard,
Mine be the gift of fruit and shade,
Your songs be my reward.

"Mr Pratt of Peterborough" was, as we learn from a poem in Pearch's *Supplement to Dodsley's Collection*, also a friend of the birds. In *The Partridges: An Elegy*, he denounces sportsmen who kill birds for pleasure. He begins with a description of the incident which has so excited his wrath:

"Hard by yon copse, that skirts the flowery vale,
As late I walked to taste the evening breeze,
A plaintive murmur mingled in the gale,
And notes of sorrow echoed through the trees.

Touched by the pensive sound, I nearer drew:
But my rude step increased the cause of pain:
Soon o'er my head the whirring Partridge flew,
Alarmed; and with her flew an infant train.

But short th'excursion;—for, unused to play,
Feebly the unfledged wings th'essay could make:
The parent, sheltered by the closing day,
Lodged her loved covey in a neighbouring brake.

Her cradling pinions there she amply spread,
And hushed th'affrighted family to rest;
But still the late alarm suggested dread,
And closer to their feathery friend they pressed.

She, wretched parent! doomed to various woe,
Felt all a mother's hope, a mother's care;
With grief foresaw the dawn's impending blow,
And to avert it, thus preferred her prayer:

O thou! who e'en the sparrow dost befriend,
Whose providence protects the harmless wren;
Thou God of birds! these innocents defend
From the vile sport of unrelenting men.

For soon as dawn shall dapple yonder skies,
The slaughtering gunner, with the tube of fate,
While the dire dog the faithless stubble tries,
Shall persecute our tribe with annual hate.

O may the sun, unfanned by cooling gale,
Parch with unusual heat th'undewy ground;
So shall the pointer's wonted cunning fail,
So shall the sportsman leave my babes unfound.

Then shall I fearless guide them to the mead,
Then shall I see with joy the plumage grow;
Then shall I see (fond thought!) their future breed,
And every transport of a parent know.

But if some victim must endure the dart,
And Fate marks out that victim from my race,
Strike, strike the leaden vengeance through this heart;
Spare, spare my babes; and I the death embrace.'"

Noble partridges indeed, this breed of the eighteenth century. But the reader must have long been weary of the verse which birds inspired, so with one concluding example, which is not bad, but good in its simplicity, I pass on. The poem is the work of Michael Bruce, or possibly of John Logan. Bruce most probably was its author.

Ode to the Cuckoo

Hail! beauteous stranger of the wood,
Attendant on the Spring!
Now Heaven repairs thy rural seat,
And woods thy welcome sing.

Soon as the daisy decks the green,
Thy certain voice we hear:
Hast thou a star to guide thy path,
Or mark the rolling year?

Delightful visitant! with thee
I hail the time of flowers,
When heaven is filled with music sweet
Of birds among the bowers.

The school-boy, wandering in the wood,
To pull the flowers so gay,
Starts thy curious voice to hear,
And imitates thy lay.

Soon as the pea puts on the bloom,
Thou fly'st thy vocal vale,
An annual guest, in other lands,
Another Spring to hail.

Sweet bird! thy bower is ever green,
Thy sky is ever clear;
Thou hast no sorrow in thy song,
No winter in thy year!

O could I fly, I'd fly with thee:
We'd make, with social wing,
Our annual visit o'er the globe,
Companions of the Spring.

The curse of much of this nature poetry of the eighteenth century is, that the poets are always too intent upon the moral to take any deep interest in the particular object by which it is inspired. As with birds, so with flowers. When Anthony Whistler writes of them, he writes with the intention which Wordsworth expressed when he said:

"One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach us more of man,
Of moral evil, and of good,
Than all the sages can."

But when Wordsworth wrote those much misunderstood lines he meant that true wisdom springs only from experience and can never be imparted by precept alone. Whistler unfortunately ignores experience, even the experience of carefully observing the flowers he employs, so eager is he to absorb or express the moral they convey:

FLOWERS

Let sages with superfluous pains
The learned page devour;
While Florio better knowledge drains
From each instructive flower.

His favourite Rose his fear alarms,
All opening to the sun;
Like vain coquettes who spread their charms,
And shine, to be undone.

The Tulip, gaudy in its dress,
And made for naught but show,
In every sense may well express
The glittering, empty beau!

The Snowdrop first but peeps to light,
And fearful shows its head;
Thus modest merit shines more bright,
By self-distrust misled.

Th'Auric'la, which through labour rose,
Yet shines compleat by art,
The force of education shows
How much it can impart.

He marks the Sensitive's nice fit;
Nor fears he to proclaim,
If each man's darling vice were hit,
That he would *act the same.*

Beneath each common hedge, he views
The Violet with care;
Hinting we should not worth refuse,
Although we find it there.

The Tuberose that lofty springs,
Nor can support its height,
Well represents imperious kings,
Grown impotent by might.

Fragrant, though pale, the Lily blows;
To teach the female breast
How virtue can its sweets disclose
In all complexions drest.

To every bloom that crowns the year,
Nature some charm decrees;
Learn hence, ye nymphs, her face to wear,
Ye cannot fail to please.

In *The Tulip and the Lily*, by James Barclay, the flowers again edify mankind. A very brief summary of this verse fable is sufficient.

The tulip, which was not only a very proud, but also a very ill-bred flower, taunts the humble lily with being inferior to itself:

"To these proud taunts and more beside,
The lily not a word replied.
But hung her head with modest grace,
Nor looked th'insulter in the face."

Fortunately the lily finds an opportune defender in the bee:

"Not so the bee, who murmured near,
And chanced th'opprobrious strain to hear,
Ill-pleased to see the flower neglected,
Which she so honoured and respected,
From whose full cup she daily drew
So large a share of precious dew."

The bee chivalrously quits drinking and takes up the debate against the overweening tulip, proving that flower's inferiority by a chain of arguments which culminates in the assertion that the lily

"On Cloe's breast still seen to blow
Adds whiteness to the dazzling snow:
And dealing sweetness, though in death,
Perfumes e'en Cloe's fragrant breath."

With this the poem ends, the tulip apparently being too humiliated to reply.

The seasons were also a popular subject of the eighteenth-century poet. Pope had set the fashion with his Pastorals, which had in turn influenced Thomson to write *The Seasons*, and so the poetry of seasons progressed merrily.

I do not propose to quote from these at any length, but Thomas Brerewood's *Pastoral Ballads* may furnish a convenient example of what was done in this kind. In *Spring* he sings:

" When approached by the fair dewy fingers of Spring,
Swelling buds open first, and look gay,
When the birds on the boughs by their mates sit and sing,
And are danced by the breeze on each spray:

When gently descending, the rain in soft showers,
With its moisture refreshes the ground,
And the drops, as they hang on the plants and the flowers,
Like rich gems breathe a lustre around:

When the wood-pigeons sit on the branches and coo,
And the cuckoo proclaims with his voice,
That Nature marks this for the season to woo,
And for all that can love to rejoice:

In a cottage at night may I spend all my time,
In the fields and the meadows all day,
With a maiden whose charms are as yet in their prime,
Young as April and blooming as May."

The other seasons are treated similarly, in turn.

Moses Mendez gives us in Spenserian verse his impressions of the seasons:

"The balmy cowslip gilds the smiling plain,
The virgin snowdrop boasts her silver hue,
An hundred tints the gaudy daisy stain,
And the meek violet in amis blue
Creeps low to earth, and hides from public view;
But the rank nettle rears her crest on high;
So ribaulds loose their front unblushing show,
While modest merit doth neglected lie,
And pines in lonely shade unseen of vulgar eye."

John Scott writes moralising *Elegies* on the seasons which we will spare the reader. In an age given to moralising in verse, the seasons were too obvious a peg not to have the appropriate lessons attached to them. It is so not only in the poems mentioned, but also in most others of this kind. For instance, *A Winter Thought*, by J. Earle, concludes with the inevitable moral, but the earlier portion is an interesting example of the appreciation of nature in the eighteenth century:

"The man whose constitution's strong,
And free from vexing cares his mind,
As changing seasons pass along,
Can in them all fresh pleasures find.

Not only in the teeming bud,
The opening leaf, and following bloom,
(Urged by the sap's ascending flood)
And fruit fair knitting in its room,—

Not only when the smiling fields
In all their gaiety appear,
And the perfumes their bosom yields,
On balmy wings the zephyrs bear,—

In morning fair, in evening mild,
The murmuring brook, and cooling shade,
Birds' airy notes in concerts wild,
And Philomela's serenade,—

Not only in the waving ear,
And branches bending with their load,
Or whilst the produce of the year
Is gathering, and in safety stowed.

He, pleased, in days autumnal sees
The shadowy leaf diversified
With various colours, and the trees
Stripped, and stand forth in naked pride.

Each hollow blast, and hasty shower,
The rattling hail, the fleecy snow,
The candied rime, and scattered hoar,
And icicles which downward grow;

The shining pavement of the flood
To which the youthful tribes resort,
And game, which the discovered wood
Exposes to the fowler's sport;

The greens, which wintry blasts defy,
Through native strength, or human care,
In hedge, or close arrangery
All these a source of pleasure are.

The sun which from the northern signs
Scorched with unsufferable heat,
Now in a milder glory shines,
And every glancing ray is sweet.

The silver moon, and each fair star,
Forth to the best advantage shine,
And by the richest scene prepare
For noble thoughts th'enlargèd mind.

He, when the mornings slowest rise,
  Can sweetly pass the nights away,
In lucubration with the wise,
  Or conversation with the gay.

And when the winter tedious grows,
  And lengthening days cold stronger bring,
A new increasing pleasure flows,
  From expectation of the spring.

So he whose faculties are sound,
  His heart upright and conscience clean,
Agreeably can pass his round
  Of life, in every shifting scene.

Not only in his youthful prime,
  And whilst his powers continue firm,
But when he feels th'effect of time,
  And age prepares him for the worm.

Grateful for every blessing past,
  Patient in every present ill;
And on whatever ground he's placed,
  Hope does with pleasing prospects fill;

And faith in Heaven's enchanting love
  (From whence the Sun will soon appear
Whose smiles make endless Spring above)
  Does all his damps and darkness clear."

The following stanzas by John Cunningham present a picture of rural life which in its slightly idealised realism recalls the similar paintings of Constable and of Gainsborough :—

Evening

O'er the heath the heifer strays
Free—the furrowed task is done.
Now, the village windows blaze,
Burnished by the setting sun.

Now he hides behind the hill,
Sinking from a golden sky.
Can the pencil's mimic skill
Copy the refulgent dye?

Trudging as the plowmen go,
To the smoking hamlet bound,
Giant-like their shadows grow,
Lengthened o'er the level ground.

Where the rising forest spreads
Shelter for the lordly dome,
To their high-built airy beds
See the rooks returning home!

As the lark with varied tune
Carols to the evening loud,
Mark the mild resplendent moon
Breaking through a parted cloud!

Now the hermit howlet peeps
From the barn or twisted brake;
And the blue mist slowly creeps,
Curling on the silver lake.

As the trout in speckled pride
Playful from its bosom springs,
To the banks a ruffled tide
Verges in successive rings.

Tripping through the silken grass,
O'er the path-divided dale,
Mark the rose-complexioned lass,
With her well-poised milking-pail!

Linnets with unnumbered notes,
And the cuckoo-bird with two,
Tuning sweet their mellow throats,
Bid the setting sun Adieu!

Charlotte Smith has left us a pleasing though sentimental poem on night, which, as it first appeared in 1807, may have been written after the close of the century:

Evening

Oh, soothing hour, when glowing day
Low on the western wave declines,
And village murmurs die away,
And bright the vesper planet shines!

I love to hear the gale of even,
Breathing along the new-leaf'd copse,
And feel the freshening dew of heaven
Fall silently in limpid drops.

For like a friend's consoling sighs
That breeze of night to me appears;
And as soft dew from pity's eyes
Descend those pure celestial tears.

Alas! for those who long have borne,
Like me, a heart by sorrow riven;
Who but the plaintive winds will mourn?
What tears will fall but those of heaven?

We have seen Keats anticipated by Cuthbert Shaw in his *Ode to the Nightingale*, let us now turn to an *Ode on Autumn* written by an anonymous poet in 1761 :

" Adieu the pleasing rural scene,
Sequestered shades and meadows green,
The field thick spread with sheaves of corn,
The walk at early hour of morn.

No linnet's salutary song
Soft echoes now the sprays among :
No nightingale's more plaintive strain
Soothes the lone peasant on the plain.

The vales their cheerful green resign,
And on their stems the flowers decline :
No more we wish to pass the hour
Where elms and lilacs form a bower.

And see the swallows leave their home,
To distant, warmer climes they roam ;
Where zephyrs cool and grateful showers
Still wake the fair autumnal flowers."

So sings this unknown poet with an obviously real love of the country, but with him, as with all who make Nature the subject of their song in the eighteenth century, the inevitable moral must close the poem :

" How fade the glories of the year !
They bloom awhile and disappear,
And, melancholy truth, fond man !
Thy life's a flower, thy day's a span.

Parent of all ! Tremendous Power !
Whom every realm and tongue adore,
Whose mandate formed earth's spacious plain,
And the immeasurable main ;

Prostrate before Thy throne we bow,
Author of circling seasons Thou!
O hasten happier days, and bring
One Glorious, One Eternal Spring."

The concluding moral of these poets of nature in that age was doubtless largely a poetic convention, and there were obviously many who knew how to take full advantage of the natural beauty of England at that time. Yet when all has been said for them that can be said, how little the eighteenth-century poets have left us in their poems of the exquisite beauty that lay everywhere at their doors, and still lives in the paintings of Constable, Gainsborough and Wilson. Perhaps for them the open country was too wild, lacked elegance and refinement, so that appreciation of the Lake Country came in only with the revival of " Gothick " wildness and grandeur.

In general, the earlier eighteenth century preferred Nature as a delightful background for human elegance; if they go into the country at all, they will make of it a Watteau *fête champêtre*. How like Watteau is the following extract from a letter of Mrs Delaney. It is a description of a *fête champêtre*, given in honour of the approaching marriage of Lord Stanley and Lady Betty Hamilton. The festival described took place in 1774, so that we see how late in the century this spirit prevailed:

" I think it a fairy scene that may equal any in Madame Danois. Lord Stanley, the master of the entertainment, was dressed like Reubens, Lady Betty Hamilton like Reubens' wife. The company was received upon the lawn before the house, which is

scattered with trees, and opens to the downs. The company arriving made the scene most enchanting, and it was greatly enlivened by a most beautiful setting sun breaking from a black cloud in its greatest glory. After half an hour's sauntering the company were called to the other side, to a more confined spot, where benches were placed in a semicircle, and a fortunate clump of trees in the centre of a small lawn had a band of music; a stage was formed by a part being divided from the other part of the garden with sticks entwined with natural flowers in wreaths and festoons. A little dialogue between a shepherd and a shepherdess, with a welcome to the company, was sung and said, and then dancing by sixteen men and sixteen women, *figurantis* from the opera, lasted about half an hour, after which the party was employed in swinging, shooting with bows and arrows, and various country sports. The gentlemen and ladies danced on the green till it was dark, and then preceded the music to the other side of the garden, where a magnificent saloon had been built, illuminated, and decorated with the utmost elegance; here they danced till supper, when curtains were drawn up, which showed the supper in a most convenient and elegant apartment which was built quite round the saloon. After the supper, which was exceedingly good, there was an interlude, in which a Druid entered as an inhabitant of the *Oaks*, welcomed Lady Betty, described the happiness of Lord Stanley, and in a prophetic strain foretold the happiness that must follow so happy a union, which, with choruses and singing and dancing by the dryads, Cupid and Hymen attending, concluded with a transparent painting with the crest of Hamilton and Stanley surrounded by emblems of Cupid and Hymen crowning it with a wreath of flowers. People in general were very elegantly dressed; the very young as peasants, the next as Polonaise, the matrons in dominos, and the men

in dominos, and many gardiniers [*sic*], as in the opera dances."

I suspect that, in general, the taste of the age preferred Nature served to it with such sauces, if it desired Nature at all, but the same may with safety be said of the ages which have succeeded it. Here and there a Lady Winchilsea might steal out for nocturnal reverie under the stars, a morbid Gray might linger in the churchyard as sunset died in night, or a Cowper find rest from spiritual agony in the brightness of a spring morning, but to say that such were few in the eighteenth century is not to depreciate its love of Nature, for such are few in any age. Nevertheless we see the taste for wilder, grander scenery growing as the century advances. From the artificial-natural gardens of "Capability Brown" and Shenstone's "Leasowes" we move on to the enthusiastic contemplation of the open country.

John Brown delights to write a letter praising the beauties of Keswick:

"At Keswick you will, on one side of the lake, see a rich and beautiful landscape of cultivated fields, rising to the eye in fine inequalities, with noble groves of oak, happily dispersed, and climbing the adjacent hills, shade above shade, in the most various and picturesque forms. On the opposite shore, you will find rocks and cliffs of stupendous height, hanging broken over the lake in horrible grandeur, some of them a thousand feet high, the woods climbing up their steep and shaggy sides, where mortal foot never yet approached: on these dreadful heights, the eagles build their nests; a variety of waterfalls are seen pouring from their summits, and tumbling in vast sheets from rock to

rock in rude and terrible magnificence: while on all sides of this immense amphitheatre the lofty mountains rise round, piercing the clouds in shapes aspiring and fantastic as the very rocks of Dovedale."

This and very much more Brown writes with all the breathless enthusiasm of an explorer reporting a strange, newly discovered country.

Gray, more sedately, but with equal delight, writes in his *Journal* of 3rd October 1769:

"Rose at seven, and walked out under the conduct of my landlord to Borrodale. The grass was covered with hoar frost, which soon melted, and exhaled in a thin bluish smoke. Crossed the meadows obliquely, catching a diversity of views among the hills over the lake and islands, and changing prospect at every ten paces . . . drew near the foot of Walla Crag, whose bare and rocky brow, cut perpendicularly down above 400 feet, as I guess, awefully overlooks the way. Our path here tends to the left, and the ground gently rising, and covered with a glade of scattering trees and bushes on the very margin of the water, opens both ways the most delicious view, that my eyes ever beheld. Behind you are the magnificent heights of Walla Crag; opposite lie the thick hanging woods of Lord Egremont, and Newland Valley, with green and smiling fields embosomed in the dark cliffs; to the left the jaws of Borrodale, with that turbulent chaos of mountain behind mountain rolled in confusion; beneath you, and stretching far away to the right, the shining purity of the Lake, just ruffled by the breeze enough to show it is alive, reflecting rocks, woods, fields and inverted tops of mountains, with the white buildings of Keswick, Crosthwait Church, and Skiddaw for a background at distance."

Here we are far indeed in spirit from the *fêtes champêtres* of Watteau, or Dr Johnson's wholesale condemnation of the country.

One counterpart at least Brown and Gray have amongst the eighteenth-century poets, one indeed who expressed their attitude to Nature long before themselves, for Dyer's *Grongar Hill* appeared as early as 1726. In this poem, one of the most charming descriptive poems in our language, we find a keen appreciation of natural beauty, finely expressed. It is indeed a picture in words, and we are not surprised to find its author a painter himself. Unfortunately the poem is too long to quote in full—perhaps some would say too long to be regarded as a lyric—but the lyrical quality in it is everywhere obvious.

We pass regretfully over the delightful opening invocation and ascent of the hill, and turn to the description of the landscape when the poet has attained the summit:

" Now, I gain the mountain's brow,
What a landscape lies below!
No clouds, no vapours intervene,
But the gay, the open scene
Does the face of nature show,
In all the hues of heaven's bow!
And, swelling to embrace the light,
Spreads around beneath the sight.
Old castles on the cliffs arise,
Proudly towering in the skies!
Rushing from the woods, the spires
Seem from hence ascending fires!
Half his beams Apollo sheds
On the yellow mountain heads!

Gilds the fleeces of the flocks:
And glitters on the broken rocks!
Below me trees unnumbered rise,
Beautiful in various dyes:
The gloomy pine, the poplar blue,
The yellow beech, the sable yew,
The slender fir, that taper grows,
The sturdy oak with broad-spread boughs.
And beyond the purple grove,
Haunt of Phillis, queen of love!
Gaudy as the opening dawn,
Lies a long and level lawn,
On which a dark hill, steep and high,
Holds and charms the wandering eye!

. . . . . .

And see the rivers how they run,
Through woods and meads in shade and sun,
Sometimes swift, sometimes slow,
Wave succeeding wave, they go
A various journey to the deep,
Like human life to endless sleep!
Thus is nature's vesture wrought,
To instruct our wandering thought,
Thus she dresses green and gay,
To disperse our cares away.
Ever charming, ever new,
When will the landscape tire the view!
The fountain's fall, the river's flow,
The woody valleys warm and low;
The windy summit, wild and high,
Roughly rushing on the sky!
The pleasant seat, the ruined tower,
The naked rock, the shady bower;
The town and village, dome and farm,
Each give to each a double charm,
As pearls upon an Æthiop's arm.

. . . . . .

Now, even now, my joys run high,
As on the mountain turf I lie;
While the wanton zephyr sings,
And in the vale perfumes his wings;
While the waters murmur deep;
While the shepherd charms his sheep;
While the birds unbounded fly,
And with music fill the sky,
Now, even now, my joys run high."

So we come to the final verses, the moral, the quiet close of this joyous song, so unlike its contemporaries in poetic art:

" Be full, ye courts, be great who will;
Search for Peace with all your skill:
Open wide the lofty door,
Seek her on the marble floor,
In vain ye search, she is not there;
In vain ye search the domes of Care!
Grass and flowers Quiet treads,
On the meads, and mountain-heads,
Along with Pleasure, close allied,
Ever by each other's side:
And often by the murmuring rill,
Hears the thrush, while all is still,
Within the groves of Grongar Hill."

That is the high-water mark of eighteenth-century Nature poetry, and one of the choicest poems of its kind in our literature.

But I have more than reached my allotted space in this chapter, so I too will conclude with a moralising passage, taken from an unknown poet of the time:

"Happy the man whose tranquil mind
Sees Nature in her changes kind,
And pleased the whole surveys;
For him the morn benignly smiles,
And evening shades reward the toils
That measure out his days.

The varying year may shift the scene,
The sounding tempest lash the main,
And Heaven's own thunders roll;
Calmly he views the bursting storm,
Tempests nor thunder can deform
The morning of his soul."

VI

SOCIETY

O sweet Society!
What is living without thee?
Solitude hath oft and long
Been the theme of poet's song:
And charming Solitude
Is exquisitely fair and good;
But never, never without thee,
Best boon of Heaven, O sweet Society!

So sang the ill-fated Dr Dodd in *Society, An Ode*, which appears in his *Poems* published in 1767. Perhaps if he could have foreseen the future, and the day when society claimed his life as the penalty for forgery, he might have found less virtue in society and more in that solitude which the growing spirit of romance praised with increasing ardour.

Everywhere in the forgotten minor poetry of the century, as in the work of its chief poets, we find evidence of the strong social spirit of the age. The Town inspired the true Augustan to sing its praise and the praise of all forms of social life. In these productions the gregarious instinct in average humanity finds frequent, if not very exalted, expression.

The Town moulded human nature much more than did the country, and the ideal townsman, the beau, elegant and airy, became the subject of the poet's pen. An unsympathetic poet, the Rev. James Miller, sings:

"How brimful of nothing's the life of a beau.
They've nothing to think of! They've nothing to do.
Nor they've nothing to talk of—for nothing they know.
Such, such is the life of a beau!

For nothing they rise, but to draw the fresh air.
Spend the morning in nothing but curling their hair.
And do nothing all day, but sing, saunter and stare.
Such, such is the life of a beau!

For nothing, at night, to the playhouse they crowd.
For to mind nothing done there, they always are proud;
But to bow, and to grin, and talk nothing, aloud,
Such, such is the life of a beau!

For nothing, they run to th'assembly and ball;
And for nothing at cards a fair partner call:
For they still must be beasted[1] who've nothing at all.
Such, such is the life of a beau.

For nothing, on Sundays, at church they appear;
For they've nothing to hope; nor they've nothing to fear.
They can be nothing nowhere, who nothing are here.
Such, such is the life of a beau."

We can sympathise with the reverend poet's indignation, founded as it must have been upon sufferings inflicted by beaux who chattered during his sermons, or, worse still, slept, but we may at the same time regret his tendency to indulge in double negatives. This charge against the beaux of irreverence in church is made by another eighteenth-century poetaster, Hugh Kelly, who called himself "Jack Spatter." In verses entitled *Spatter's Rambles* we are given an

[1] "To beast" (a term at ombre) = (1) to fail to win game; (2) to incur forfeit for breaking rules.

interesting picture of the behaviour of a "fashionable congregation":

"To our parish church Sunday evening, I went,
With a laudable hope to improve,
And carried a mind most religiously bent
On the Author of all things, above.

But the temple, alas! which in ages ago
Had the rage of oppression withstood,
Now seemed more a place of amusement and show,
Than the fane of a Being so good.

Thou saw'st how the gay and the indolent fair
Appeared, gracious Lord, at thy shrine,
And the maid who would die for an opera air
Would not stoop to an anthem of Thine.

Some puppy-bepowdered, or half-headed thing,
Her attention had foolishly stole,
And raised more regard for a necklace or ring,
Than th'eternal repose of her soul.

The slave who would worship with pride all his days,
And attend on a minister's nod,
Was here quite abashed to appear in Thy praise,
And ashamed to kneel down to his God.

But, warned, O ye thoughtless, of judgment beware,
Nor your errors so impiously flatter:
For Heaven will scourge, though awhile it may spare,
Says your friendly adviser,—Jack Spatter."

That the beaux should be celebrated and the belles neglected is inconceivable, so we are not surprised to find a parallel poem to *The Life of a Beau*, though whether it be by the same author or by some imitator, I cannot say:

The Life of a Belle

What lives are so happy as those of the fair,
Who scarcely one moment from pleasure can spare;
But leave to their husbands reflection and care?
Such, such is the life of a belle.

All morning, when others are up and employed,
She's dreaming of pleasures the last night enjoyed;
Whilst Betty for orders attends at her side.
Such, such is the life of a belle.

She breakfasts at noon, and just slips on her gown;
Calls a chair to the door, and away, round the Town.
And, just about two, in the Park is set down.
Such, such is the life of a belle.

Then, trips up the Mall, and soon joins with the rest;
And of each awkward creature she meets, makes a jest.
Kills two or three beaus; and away to be drest.
Such, such is the life of a belle.

She seldom attends either High Church, or Low;
But never is absent when other belles go.
Nor scruples to pray, if the fashion be so.
Such, such is the life of a belle.

Her dinner and dressing employ her till eve.
Some troublesome tradesman to see her begs leave;
But the coach at the door soon procures a reprieve.
Such, such is the life of a belle.

At evening, she visits, drinks tea, plays her fan,
Collects all the news, and what chit-chat she can,
And wonders her Sex can be fond of a man!
Such, such is the life of a belle!

Yet how alluring this life of the town belle must have seemed to many a dreaming maid buried in the

country, far from the ecstatic joys of London. As the chilly sunset fell cold on the window-pane, and candles were lighted for the long, quiet evening, in many a country home, visions of opera and ball, of Ranelagh and Vauxhall gorgeous in their splendour of light and colour, would rise before her eyes, mocking her with the dreary reality of her own narrow round. It was the imagination of Henry Carey, famous for his *Sally in Our Alley*, that seized upon this and expressed it in the following verses, once popular, now forgotten, *The Fine Lady's Life, or The Thoughts of an Ambitious Country Girl on the Pleasures of the Town* :—

" What though they call me country lass ;
I read it plainly in my glass
That for a duchess I might pass !
O, could I see the day !
Would Fortune but attend my call,
At Park, at Play, at Ring, at Ball,
I'd brave the proudest of them all,—
With a ' Stand by ! Clear the way ! '

Surrounded by a crowd of beaux,
With smart toupees and powdered clothes,
At rivals I'd turn up my nose !
O, could I see the day !
I'd dart such glances from these eyes,
Shall make some lord or duke, my prize !
And then, O, how I'll tyrannise,
With a ' Stand by ! Clear the way ! '

O, then for every new delight,
For equipage and diamonds bright,
Quadrille, and Plays, and Balls, all night !
O, could I see the day !

Of love and joy I'd take my fill,
The tedious hours of life to kill.
In everything I'd have my will,
With a 'Stand by! Clear the way!'"

Something of an artist, this Carey, with the artist's power of seeing, and of giving life even to a slight creation—a love-intoxicated apprentice, a country girl with ambitious dreams.

The same subject was sung by an anonymous poet of the eighteenth century, who wrote *The Country Girl's Farewell*:

"Farewell ye hills and valleys,
Farewell ye verdant shades;
I'll make more pleasant sallies
To plays and masquerades.
With joy for town I barter
Those banks where flowers grow,
What are roses to a garter?
What lilies to a beau?"

An eminently social age, the eighteenth century inevitably reflected the social spirit in its literature, and again and again in its minor poetry we find the love of social pleasures finding expression.

England, then unfettered by modern restrictions, was justly famous for, and proud of, its excellent inns. When Dr Johnson defined the ideal life, inns played a considerable part in its felicity:

"You may be wise in your study in the morning, and gay in company at a Tavern in the evening."

On another occasion Boswell writes:

"We dined at an excellent inn at Chapel-house, where he expatiated on the felicity of England in its

taverns and inns, and triumphed over the French for not having, in any perfection, the tavern life. 'There is no private house,' (said he), 'in which people can enjoy themselves so well, as at a capital tavern. Let there be ever so plenty of good things, ever so much grandeur, ever so much elegance, ever so much desire that every body should be easy; in the nature of things it cannot be: there must always be some degree of care and anxiety. The master of the house is anxious to entertain his guests; the guests are anxious to be agreeable to him; and no man, but a very impudent dog indeed, can as freely command what is in another man's house, as if it were his own, whereas, at a tavern, there is a general freedom from anxiety. You are sure you are welcome; and the more noise you make, the welcomer you are. No servants will attend you with the alacrity which waiters do, who are incited by the prospect of an immediate reward in proportion as they please. No, Sir; there is nothing which has yet been contrived by man, by which so much happiness is produced as by a good tavern or inn.' "

Boswell then informs us that Johnson repeated, "with great emotion," Shenstone's famous lines on the inn at Henley, and as Johnson and Boswell were at the time in that very hostel the lines were specially apposite. A remark of Johnson's, quoted by Sir John Hawkins, "that a tavern chair was the throne of human felicity," is another indication of Johnson's sincere love of English inns.

But before I quote Shenstone's lines — for well known as they are, I cannot omit them—it is interesting to turn to some slightly earlier verses inspired by the genial atmosphere of the eighteenth-century English inn. To such an extent did the inn become a part of English life and thought that we find it

frequently employed by the poets to illustrate some philosophic or even religious argument. Sometimes in their works we find the inn associated with the poet's deepest thoughts and feelings. Nor is this strange in days before the hideous and characterless monstrosity known as the *hôtel de luxe* had been invented, when England was covered with hostelries possessing an intimate and individual charm which still lingers in the Mitre at Oxford, the Fleur de Lis at Canterbury, and their few surviving companions. Besides its own pleasant atmosphere, the heightened contrast between the danger and discomfort of winter travel in coach or on horseback on the one hand, and the comfort and security of the inn on the other, must have emphasised the traveller's affection for a good and hospitable inn.

In *All for Love* Dryden makes the inn play its part when Cleopatra says:

" Like one, who wanders through long barren wilds
And yet foreknows no hospitable inn
Is near to succour hunger, eats his fill,
Before his painful march;
So would I feed awhile my famished eyes
Before we part; for I have far to go,
If death be far, and never must return."

Aaron Hill has left us moving verses, " written when alone in an inn at Southampton ":

" Twenty lost years have stolen their hours away,
Since in this inn, even in this room, I lay:
How changed! what then was rapture, fire, and air,
Seems now sad silence all, and blank despair!

Is it that youth paints every view too bright,
And, life advancing, fancy fades her light?
Ah, no!—nor yet is day so far declined,
Nor can time's creeping coldness reach the mind.

'Tis that I miss, th'inspirer of that youth;
Her, whose soft smile was love, whose soul was truth.
Her, from whose pain I never wished relief,
And for whose pleasure I could smile at grief.
Prospects that, viewed with her, inspired before,
Now seen without her can delight no more.
Death snatched my joys, by cutting off her share,
But left her griefs to multiply my care.

Pensive and cold this room in each changed part
I view, and, shocked, from every object start:
There hung the watch, that beating hours from day,
Told its sweet owner's lessening life away.
There her dear diamond taught the sash my name;
'Tis gone! frail image of love, life and fame.
That glass she dressed at, keeps her form no more;
Not one dear footstep tunes th'unconscious floor.
There sat she—yet those chairs no sense retain,
And busy recollection smarts in vain.
Sullen and dim, what faded scenes are here!
I wonder, and retract a starting tear,
Gaze in attentive doubt—with anguish swell,
And o'er and o'er on each weighed object dwell.
Then to the window rush, gay views invite,
And tempt idea to permit delight.
But unimpressive, all in sorrow drowned,
One void forgetful desert glooms around.

Oh, life! deceitful lure of lost desires!
How short thy period, yet how fierce thy fires!
Scarce can a passion start (we change so fast),
Ere new lights strike us and the old are past.

Schemes following schemes, so long life's taste explore,
That ere we learn to live, we live no more.
Who then can think—yet sigh to part with breath,
Or shun the healing hand of friendly death?
Guilt, penitence, and wrongs, and pain, and strife,
Form the whole heaped amount, thou flatterer, life!
Is it for this, that, tossed 'twixt hope and fear,
Peace, by new shipwrecks, numbers each new year?
Oh, take me, death! indulge desired repose,
And draw thy silent curtain round my woes.

Yet hold—one tender pang revokes that prayer,
Still there remains one claim to tax my care.
Gone though she is, she left her soul behind,
In four dear transcripts of her copied mind.
They chain me down to life, new task supply,
And leave me not at leisure yet to die!
Busied for them I yet forgo release,
And teach my wearied heart to wait for peace.
But when their day breaks broad, I welcome night,
Smile at discharge from care, and shut out light."

Prior in his delightful *Down Hall* expresses the whole of life's vicissitudes by showing the changes that have taken place in an inn since he paid his last visit to it:

" Into an old inn did this equipage roll,
At a town they call Hodson, the sign of the Bull,
Near a nymph with an urn, that divides the highway,
And into a puddle throws mother of tea.[1]

' Come here, my sweet landlady, pray how d'ye do?
Where is Cicely so cleanly, and Prudence, and Sue?
And where is the widow that dwelt here below?
And the ostler that sang about eight years ago?

[1] " Mother " of a liquid = the dregs, lees.

And where is your sister, so mild and so dear,
Whose voice to her maids like a trumpet was clear?'
'By my troth!' she replies, 'you grow younger, I think:
And pray, Sir, what wine does the gentleman drink?

'Why now let me die, Sir, or live upon trust,
If I know to which question to answer you first:
Why things, since I saw you, most strangely have varied,
The ostler is hanged, and the widow is married.

'And Prue left a child for the parish to nurse;
And Cicely went off with a gentleman's purse;
And as to my sister, so mild and so dear,
She has lain in the churchyard full many a year.'

'Well, peace to her ashes! what signifies grief?
She roasted red veal, and she powdered [1] lean beef:
Full nicely she knew to cook up a fine dish;
For tough were her pullets, and tender her fish.'

'For that matter, Sir, be you 'squire, knight, or lord,
I'll give you whate'er a good inn can afford:
I should look on myself as unhappily sped,
Did I yield to a sister, or living, or dead.

'Of mutton a delicate neck and a breast
Shall swim in the water in which they were drest;
And, because you great folks are with rarities taken,
Addle-eggs shall be next course, tossed up with rank bacon.'

[1] Salted.

Then supper was served, and the sheets they were laid;
And Morley most lovingly whispered the maid.
The maid! was she handsome? Why truly so-so.
But what Morley whispered we never shall know.

Then up rose these heroes as brisk as the sun,
And their horses, like his, were prepared to run.
Now when in the morning Matt asked for the score,
John kindly had paid it the evening before.

Their breakfast so warm to be sure they did eat,
A custom in travellers mighty discreet;
And thus with great friendship and glee they went on,
To find out the place you shall hear of anon."

So amidst flying dust-clouds and the grinding of chariot-wheels the travellers resumed their journey. I know of no other passage in English verse which has the peculiar quality of this one—such a miniature of life with its mingled coarseness and spirituality, its brutal realism and finer sentiment, its nobility and roguery, its pathos and humour, and in all, beating in the cantering anapæsts of the ballad-metre, is the rhythm of life's headlong career, the travellers' journey that stops not for the rogue who was hanged, the widow who was married or the "kind and dear" sister sleeping in the churchyard. There is the suggestion too of life's endlessly repeated cycles of laughter and tears, and the vitality which moves all is there with no modern sentimentality, or disguise, "red veal" and "powdered beef," hearty dinners and breakfasts—and then the travellers pass on.

In the eighteenth century an inn appeared to the

more thoughtful as a symbol of the world at large.[1] Dryden in *Palamon and Arcite* had written:

"Like pilgrims to th'appointed place we tend;
The world's an inn, and death the journey's end."

"There were two remarkable circumstances in his death" (says Gilbert Burnet of Archbishop Leighton). "He used often to say, that if he were to choose a place to die in, it should be an inn; it looking like a pilgrim's going home, to whom this world was all as an inn, and who was weary of the noise and confusion in it.[2] He added, that the officious tenderness and care of friends was an entanglement to a dying man; and that the unconcerned attendance of those that could be procured in such a place would give less disturbance. And he obtained what he desired; for he died at the Bell Inn, in Warwick Lane."

How like in some ways is the following charming poem by George Horne, who became Bishop of Norwich. His verses, *Written at an Inn*, are full of the atmosphere of his age:

"From much-loved friends whene'er I part,
A pensive sadness fills my heart;
Past scenes my fancy wanders o'er,
And sighs to think they are no more.

[1] *Cf.* Cicero: "Ex vita ita discedo tamquam ex hospitio, non tamquam ex domo."—*De Senectute*, xxiii. 84. Sir Thomas Browne: "For the world I count it not an inn, but an hospital; and a place not to live, but to die in."—*Religio Medici*, I. xi. Chaucer:

"This world nis but a thurghfare ful of wo,
And we ben pilgrimes passinge to and fro;
Deeth is an ende of every worldly sore."
Knight's Tale, 1989.

[2] Swift's note here is: "Canting puppy."

Along the road I musing go,
O'er many a deep and miry slough;
The shrouded moon withdraws her light,
And leaves me to the gloomy night.

An inn receives me, where, unknown,
I solitary sit me down:
Many I hear, and some I see,
I nought to them, they nought to me.

Thus in these regions of the dead,
A pilgrim's wandering life I lead,
And still at every step declare,
I've no abiding city here:

For very far from hence I dwell,
And therefore bid the world farewell,
Finding of all the joys it gives,
A sad remembrance only lives.

Rough stumbling stones my steps o'erthrow,
And lay a wandering sinner low;
Yet still my course to heaven I steer,
Though neither moon nor stars appear!

The world is like an inn; for there
Men call, and storm, and drink, and swear;
While undisturbed a Christian waits,
And reads, and writes, and meditates.

Though in the dark ofttimes I stray,
The Lord shall light me on my way,
And to the city of the sun
Conduct me, when my journey's done.

There by these eyes shall he be seen,
Who sojourned for me at an inn;
On Sion's hill I those shall hail
From whom I parted in the vale.

Why am I heavy then and sad
When thoughts like these should make me glad
Muse then no more on things below;
Arise, my soul, and let us go."

But the best-known verses on the inn, verses very popular in their day and still often known when the authorship is forgotten, are Shenstone's lines *written at an inn*, which Dr Johnson quoted.

The circumstances in which these verses were written, as recorded by Richard Graves, Shenstone's friend and biographer, are sufficiently interesting to bear repetition here:

"About the year 1750, however, Mr Shenstone had resolution enough to take a journey of near 70 miles across the country, to visit his friend Mr Whistler, in the southernmost part of Oxfordshire; with whom, though he occasionally corresponded, yet they had not seen each other for five or six years.

"And here I cannot forbear moralizing on the precarious condition of human friendships. How often has an idle dispute, the slightest jealousy, or the most trifling competition, dissolved the apparently best-founded connections!

. . . . . .

"The visit which I allude to occasioned only a temporary coolness and interruption of correspondence between Mr Shenstone and Mr Whistler; for they retained a sincere regard for each other, as appears by letters since printed, as long as they lived.

"Mr Whistler having a mother alive, who was married to a clergyman of fortune, they lived in the manor-house; but had fitted up a very small box for him in

the same village, where he lived in an elegant style, and was visited by all the genteel families in the neighbourhood. Mr Whistler, with manly sense, and a fine genius, had a delicacy of taste and softness of manners, bordering on effeminacy. He laid a stress on trivial circumstances, in his domestic æconomy, which Mr Shenstone affected to despise. As people in small families find it difficult to retain a valuable servant, Mr Whistler made it a rule to prevent, as much as possible, any intercourse with strange servants; and, without making any apology for it, had sent Mr Shenstone's servant to a little inn in the village. This was a little disgusting: but, unfortunately, while Mr Shenstone was there, Mr Whistler thought proper to give a ball and supper to two or three of the most respectable families in the neighbourhood.

"Mr Shenstone (as he says in a letter on that occasion) never liked that place. 'There was too much trivial elegance, punctilio, and speculation in that polite neighbourhood. They do nothing but play at cards,' says he, 'and, on account of my ignorance of any creditable game, I was forced to lose my money; and, *two evenings*[1] out of seven, at Pope Joan, with Mr P——'s children.'"

"This disposed him to ridicule Mr Whistler's great solicitude in preparing for his entertainment: instead, therefore, of paying any regards to the hints which were given him, that it was time to dress for their company, Mr Shenstone continued lolling at his ease, taking snuff and disputing rather perversely on the folly and absurdity, of laying a stress upon such trifles: and, in short, the dispute ran so high, that, although Mr Shenstone suppressed his choler that evening, yet he curtailed his visit two or three days, and took a cool leave the next morning, and decamped; and, traversing the whole country, reached Edge-hill that

[1] Italics are Graves's or Shenstone's.

night, where, in a summer-house, he wrote the four following lines:

" ' Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still has found
The warmest welcome at an inn.' "

In a footnote Graves adds: " There were more stanzas added afterwards, which diminished the force of the principal thought."

This breach was only temporary, as Shenstone's biographer informs us: " Mr Whistler still expressed the highest regard for Mr Shenstone: and Mr Shenstone still retained the same warmth of affection for his old friend." Dodsley gives the whole poem thus:

" To thee, fair Freedom! I retire,
From flattery, feasting, dice, and din;
Nor art thou found in domes much higher,
Than the low cot, or humble inn.

'Tis here with boundless power I reign,
And every health which I begin
Converts dull port to bright champagne;
For Freedom crowns it, at an inn.

I fly from pomp, I fly from plate,
I fly from Falsehood's specious grin;
Freedom I love, and form I hate,
And choose my lodgings, at an inn.

Here, waiter! take my sordid ore,
Which lacqueys else might hope to win;
It buys what courts have not in store,
It buys me Freedom, at an inn.

And now once more I shape my way
Through rain or shine, through thick or thin,
Secure to meet at close of day
With kind reception—at an inn.

Whoe'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his various tour has been,
May sigh to think how oft he found
His warmest welcome—at an inn."

A choice example of poetic "sublimation."

In many other ways besides those already mentioned have social customs and historical events left their impress upon this forgotten literature of the eighteenth century. Here is a realistic picture of the coffee-house in an age when that institution was at the zenith of its glory:

"Last night at the coffee-house happening to sit,
I was wearied with noise and dispute,
Quite sick of eternal discourses on Pitt,
And just jaded to Death about Bute.

A number of heads magisterially great,
In a spirited party were thrown,
All striving to settle the peace of the state,
Though they lost every thought of their own.

The victories of Amherst, the conquests of Hawke,
Were stretched in one wonderful link,
And fellows were boldly presuming to talk,
Who were never permitted to think.

A barber convinced the whole council with ease,
What a loss from our treaty must spring;
And a humble retailer of bacon and cheese
Was employed in directing his king.

O when will discretion in tenderness shed
One sensible beam on this land!
And hinder each puppy from troubling his head
About what he can ne'er understand!

Come, Goddess! O come! and inspire some degree
Of thy daughter, fair Decency's rules:
Must insolence still be the claim of the free?
Or shall liberty mould us to fools?

Such only should talk and discourse of the state
Who are perfectly versed in the matter,
In others 'tis boldness or folly to prate,
Take the word of your humble—Jack Spatter." [1]

We are reminded in these verses of Addison's "Political Upholsterer":

"When we had fully discussed this point, my friend the upholsterer began to exert himself upon the present negociations of peace; in which he deposed princes, settled the bounds of kingdoms, and balanced the power of Europe, with great justice and impartiality."

Of wine as of inns, but less philosophically, the eighteenth century sang often and loudly. The following anonymous song from *The Musical Miscellany*, 1729, is representative of many drinking songs whose moral is *carpe diem*:—

"As swift as time put round the glass,
And husband well life's little space;
Perhaps your sun which shines so bright
May set in everlasting night.

[1] *Cf. supra*, p. 157.

Or if the sun again should rise,
Death ere the morn may close our eyes.
Then drink before it be too late,
And snatch the present hour from fate.

Come, fill a bumper, fill it round,
Let mirth and wit and wine abound.
In these alone true wisdom lies,
For to be merry's to be wise."

Another forgotten devotee of the bottle is ready even for martyrdom in the good cause:

" Should I die by the force of good wine,
'Tis my will that a tun be my shrine;
And for the age to come,
Engrave this story on my tomb:
' Here lies a body once so brave
Who with drinking made his grave.' "

Some of these enthusiasts prefer wine to women, if a choice must be made:

" When I visit proud Celia, just come from my glass,
She tells me I'm flustered and look like an ass;
When I mean of my passion to put her in mind,
She bids me leave drinking, or she'll never be kind.

That she's charmingly handsome, I very well know;
And so is my bottle, each brimmer so too;
And to leave my soul's joys, oh! 'tis nonsense to ask,
Let her go to the Devil, bring t'other full flask."

After announcing that he would have abandoned gaming and other pleasures for the exacting Celia, the poet proceeds:

"Had she bade me read homilies three times a day,
She perhaps had been humoured with little to say.
But at night to deny me my flask of dear red,
Let her go to the Devil, there's no more to be said."

"While there is life, there is drink," say these eighteenth-century roisterers; so they heartily roar:

"Let's be jovial and gay,
Live well while we may,
And drown in good liquor our sorrow:
For time will ere long
Put an end to our song,
And who knows but it may be to-morrow."

Matthew Concanen expresses a similar philosophy of life in the following *Ballad*:—

"How void of ease,
He spends his days
Who wastes his time in thinking.
How like a beast,
That ne'er can taste
The pleasures of good drinking.
May curses light upon the sot
That ever kennels sober,
Or rises e'er without a pot
Of lovely brown *October*.

Let others raise
Their voice, to praise
The Rhenish or the Sherry,
The sparkling white
Champagne so bright,
The Claret or Canary.
'Tis true, they'll thaw the freezing blood,
And hinder our being sober;
But what for that was e'er so good
As lovely brown *October*.

What knaves are they,
Who cross the sea,
To bring such stuffs among us?
How blind are we,
Who will not see
How grievously they wrong us.
They spoil the products of the land,
And of her coin disrobe her;
But yet their dregs can never stand
Against our brave *October*.

My jolly boys,
Let us rejoice,
And cast away our sorrow.
Let's never think
While thus we drink,
What may fall out to-morrow.
Let's waste our wealth, enjoy content,
And never more live sober:
By Jove, the coin is brightly spent
That's melted in *October*."

How characteristic are these songs of that society described by Pope in a letter to Cromwell dated 1710:

"I assure you I am looked upon in the neighbourhood for a very sober and well-disposed person, no great hunter indeed, but a great esteemer of the noble sport, and only unhappy in my want of constitution for that and drinking. They all say 'tis pity I am so sickly, and I think 'tis pity they are so healthy; but I say nothing that may destroy their good opinion of me. I have not quoted one Latin author since I came down, but have learned without book a song of Mr Thomas Durfey's, who is your only poet of tolerable reputation in this country. He makes all the merriment in our entertainments, and but for him there would be so miserable a dearth of catches that I fear they would *sans*

cérémonie put either the parson or me upon making some of them. Any man, of any quality, is heartily welcome to the best toping-table of our gentry, who can roundly hum out some fragments or rhapsodies of his works; so that, in the same manner as it was said of Homer to his detractors—What! dares any man speak against him who has given so many men to eat?—(meaning the rhapsodists who lived by repeating his verses), so may it be said of Mr Durfey to his detractors—Dares anyone despise him who has made so many men drink? Alas, Sir! this is a glory which neither you nor I must ever pretend to. Neither you, with your Ovid, nor I, with my Statius, can amuse a whole Board of justices and extraordinary squires, or gain one hum of approbation, or laugh of admiration. These things, they would say, are too studious; they may do well enough with such as love reading, but give us your ancient poet Mr Durfey. It is mortifying enough, it must be confessed; but, however, let us proceed in the way that nature has directed us."

Perhaps never before or after have food and drink inspired so many poets. The titles alone of these songs reveal one side of the age: *The Roast Beef of Old England*, *The Cheshire Cheese*, *The Jolly Miller*, *The Brown Jug*.

Amongst these drinking songs one, *The Deserter's Meditation*,[1] stands out from its fellows, both by its deeper tone and more poetic form:

"If sadly thinking
With spirits sinking,
Could more than drinking my cares compose,
A cure for sorrow
From sighs I'd borrow,
And hope to-morrow would end my woes.

[1] By John Philpot Curran.

But as in wailing
There's naught availing,
And death unfailing will strike the blow,
Then for that reason,
And for a season,
Let us be merry before we go.

To joy a stranger,
A way-worn ranger,
In every danger my course I've run;
Now hope all ending,
And death befriending,
His last aid lending, my cares are done.

No more a rover
Or hapless lover,
My griefs are over,—my glass runs low;
Then for that reason,
And for a season,
Let us be merry before we go."

"Hunting" (wrote Walsh in the Preface to Dryden's *Pastorals* in 1697) "has now an idea of quality joined to it, and is become the most important business in the life of a gentleman."

As we should expect in that age of Squire Westerns, hunting songs abound, such as the following by Henry Carey:—

"Away, away! the stag's at bay,
The hounds are waiting for their prey;
The huntsman's call invites ye all,
Come in, come in, boys! while you may.

The jolly horn, the rosy morn,
The harmony of deep-mouthed hounds:
These, these, my boys, are heavenly joys;
A sportsman's pleasure knows no bounds."

The following verses are by one of the "fox-hunting parsons" of the eighteenth century, the Rev. Leonard Howard, who published his poems in 1765 :—

Fox-Hunting. A Song

Come rise, lads, and mount, the brisk fox-hunters cry,
We've got a strong scent and a favouring sky ;
The horn's sprightly notes and the lark's early song,
With their music expose you for sleeping so long.

Bright Phœbus has shown you a glimpse of his face,
Peeps in at your windows, and calls to the chase ;
He soon will be up, for his dawn wears away,
And he'll make the field blush for your idle delay.

Sweet Molly may tease you again to lie down,
And if you should leave her, perhaps she will frown ;
But tell her soft love must to hunting give place,
For as well as her charms there are charms in a chase.

. . . . . .

Then we'll over the hedges nor stop at the gate,
Nor mind fearful riders of danger who prate :
Neck or nothing, my boys, is the fox-hunter's cry,
And Elysium's our field if in this we should die.

Look yonder ! Look yonder ! Old Renard I see,
Sweet Flora and Chanter at his brush soon will be :
Hark forward, they've snapt him, look, his eye-balls
they roll,
Let's be in at the death then go home to our bowl.

There the chase we'll renew, fill a glass to the king ;
From a bumper fresh sport and fresh *duty* will spring.
To great George peace and glory may heaven dispense,
And fox-hunting flourish a thousand years hence.

How like it all is to Pope's description of his country neighbours and Goldsmith's picture of Tony Lumpkin and his friends.

Soame Jenyns gives us a little conceit:

Chloe Hunting

Whilst thousands court fair Chloe's love,
She fears the dangerous joy,
But, Cynthia-like, frequents the grove,
As lovely, and as coy.

With the same speed she seeks the hind,
Or hunts the flying hare,
She leaves pursuing swains behind,
To languish and despair.

Oh, strange caprice in thy dear breast,
Whence first this whim began;
To follow thus each worthless beast,
And shun their sovereign, man!

Consider, Fair, what 'tis you do,
How thus they both must die,
Not surer they when you pursue,
Than we whene'er you fly.

Paul Whitehead wrote a hunting song which is worthy of resurrection here:

"The sun from the east tips the mountains with gold;
The meadows all spangled with dew-drops behold!
Hear! the lark's early matin proclaims the new day,
And the horn's cheerful summons rebukes our delay.

Chorus [1]

With the sports of the field there's no pleasure can vie,
While jocund we follow the hounds in full cry.

[1] The chorus is repeated after each stanza.

Let the drudge of the town make riches his sport;
The slave of the state hunt the smiles of a court;
No care and ambition our pastime annoy,
But innocence still gives a zest to our joy.

Mankind all are hunters in various degree;
The priest hunts a living—the lawyer a fee,
The doctor a patient,—the courtier a place,
Though often, like us, he's flung out in the chase.

The cit hunts a plum—while the soldier hunts fame,
The poet a dinner—the patriot a name;
And the practised coquette, though she seems to refuse,
In spite of her airs, still her lover pursues.

Let the bold and the busy hunt glory and wealth;
All the blessing we ask is the blessing of health,
With hound and with horn through the woodlands to roam,
And, when tired abroad, find contentment at home.
With the sports of the field there's no pleasure can vie,
While jocund we follow our hounds in full cry."

To omit Fielding's hunting song in *Don Quixote in England* is impossible; nor does its inclusion need apology, for the first stanza is the only one generally known:

"The dusky night rides down the sky,
And ushers in the morn;
The hounds all join in glorious cry,
The huntsman winds his horn:
And a-hunting we will go.

The wife around her husband throws
Her arms, and begs his stay;
My dear, it rains, and hails, and snows,
You will not hunt to-day.
But a-hunting we will go.

A brushing fox in yonder wood,
Secure to find we seek;
For why, I carried sound and good
A cartload there last week.
And a-hunting we will go.

Away he goes, he flies the rout,
Their steeds all spur and switch;
Some are thrown in, and some thrown out,
And some thrown in the ditch.
But a-hunting we will go.

At length his strength to faintness worn,
Poor Renard ceases flight,
Then hungry, homeward we return,
To feast away the night.
Then a-drinking we will go."

When Johnson, according to Mrs Piozzi, remarked, "It is very strange and very melancholy that the paucity of human pleasures should persuade us ever to call hunting one of them," he was obviously expressing only his personal opinion, and by no means that of his age.

We find an interesting reminder of old customs in a protest against duelling by "Mr Parrott," who wrote an *Ode to a Friend wounded in a Duel.* Mr Parrott, who was obviously angry at his friend's foolishness or misfortune, cries:

"How long shall tyrant custom bind
In slavish chains the human mind?
How long shall false fantastic honour draw
The vengeful sword, with fury fell,
And rancorous malice, dark as hell,
In spite of Reason's rule and Nature's eldest law?

The poem consists of advice to duellists to save their valour for use against England's foes, not to turn their swords against fellow-Englishmen. All of which excellently demonstrates that the forcible expression of Truth in rhymed and rhythmic forms is not necessarily poetry.

In an age of wars by land and sea, of rapidly expanding Empire, of increasing commerce, war songs, soldier songs and sea songs were many. To the eighteenth century we owe such general favourites as *Rule, Britannia*,[1] the still popular *Hearts of Oak*,[2] the once famous *Admiral Hosier's Ghost*,[3] and possibly the National Anthem, which has been, probably falsely, attributed to Henry Carey. But whether the National Anthem originated in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, it was not until the Scottish rebellion of 1745 that it became popular. It was the 1745 which gave the song the importance of a national appeal, and at the present day, when Scotland clamours for our Prince of Wales to remember that he is also Prince of Scotland, it is amusing to recall a forgotten stanza of the National Anthem, added during "the '45":

> "O, grant that Marshal Wade
> May, by Thy mighty aid,
> Victory bring!
> May he sedition hush;
> And like a torrent rush
> Rebellious Scots to crush!
> God save the King."

Of soldier songs we find: *The Volunteer*,[4] *The Soldier's Adieu*,[5] and Henry Carey's *Brave Grenadiers, Rejoice.*

[1] By James Thomson, almost certainly. [2] By David Garrick.
[3] By Richard Glover. [4] Anon. [5] By Dibdin.

Sailor songs became prominent partly as a result of naval warfare, partly owing to the increasing extent and importance of transmarine trade.

George Alexander Stevens wrote *Cease, Rude Boreas*, while Charles Dibdin and John O'Keefe, with *Tom Bowling*,[1] *Blow High, Blow Low*,[2] and others, carried on the tradition of sea song which Young had originated early in the century. But these are too well known to require quotation here.

Again and again amongst the forgotten verses of the day we find echoes of the century's wars: the pleas of wounded soldiers for pensions, grumblings at pensions that were inadequate—old yet modern too—echoes also of the days of the press-gang; but as examples of either good or bad verse these as a whole are hardly worthy of quotation.

In *The Recruiting Sergeant's Song*, by David Mallet, we get a pale reflection of the spirit of England at the time:

" Adieu! for a while, to the town and its trade!
Adieu! to the meadow and rake!
Our country, my boys, calls aloud for our aid;
And shall we that country forsake?

It never was known, that true hearts like our own,
From hardships, or hazards would flinch!
Let our foes then unite! We will show them in fight
What Britons can do at a pinch!

A slave may he be! who will not agree
To join with his neighbours, and sing,
'That the brave and the free (such, Britons!) are we!
Live but for their country and king!' "

[1] By Dibdin. [2] *Ibid.*

Here and there too some isolated, abstractedly philosophic soul would look on the stir and confusion of the strife around him with different eyes, and sing in a different note, as does the Quaker, John Scott of Amwell, in his

Ode on Hearing the Drum

I hate that drum's discordant sound,
Parading round, and round, and round:
To thoughtless youth it pleasure yields,
And lures from cities and from fields,
To sell their liberty for charms
Of tawdry lace, and glittering arms;
And when Ambition's voice commands,
To march, and fight, and fall, in foreign lands.

I hate that drum's discordant sound,
Parading round, and round, and round:
To me it talks of ravaged plains,
And burning towns, and ruined swains,
And mangled limbs, and dying groans,
And widows' tears, and orphans' moans;
And all that Misery's hand bestows,
To fill the catalogue of human woes.

By both similarity and contrast the modern reader is reminded of Mr A. E. Housman's poem:

"On the idle hill of summer
Sleepy with the flow of streams,
Far I hear the steady drummer
Drumming like a noise in dreams."

A pleasing example surely of the often unconscious continuity of our poetry.

Many other examples of social life finding expression in eighteenth-century verse I might add, but I have

already quoted enough, if not too many instances. I began with a poetic eulogy of the social spirit by Dr Dodd, so characteristic of the age. I will close with an equally characteristic one by Richard West, Gay's ill-fated friend:

> " What though from sorrow free, at best
> I'm thus but negatively blest:
> Yet still I find true joy I miss;
> True joy's a social bliss."

VII

LIFE

Whilst smoke arises from my pipe,
  Thus to myself I say:
Why should I anxious be for life
  Which vanishes away?

Our social snuff-boxes convey
  The same ideas just;
As if they silently would say,
  Let's mingle dust to dust.

ANON.

IN previous chapters I have tried to show the attitude of the eighteenth century to various aspects of life—to love, death, reason, and other elements in the complexity of existence. But it is surely of interest to observe, in conclusion, the outlook upon life as a whole, so far as it finds expression in the shorter verses of the time.

Whatever disguise of flippancy or gaiety the age might adopt, at heart it was pessimistic about life. Reason could find little hope when it went down to ultimates. Here again we find a negative rather than a positive attitude; only in Blake do we see an outstanding exception to the general rule. Johnson, as usual, throws light on this subject.

"He this day" (says Boswell) "enlarged upon Pope's melancholy remark:

'Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest.'

He asserted that the present was never a happy state

to any human being; but that, as every part of life, of which we are conscious, was at some point of time a period yet to come, in which felicity was expected, there was some happiness produced by hope. Being pressed upon this subject, and asked if he really was of opinion, that though, in general, happiness was very rare in human life, a man was not sometimes happy in the moment that was present, he answered, 'Never, but when he is drunk.'"

Perhaps, in the cooler blood of a calm and dispassionate judgment, Johnson would not have ventured to support the extreme statement that he made in the provocation of argument; but in the main the saying is a true expression of Johnson's attitude to life. It was not so much joy in life as a native energy and a corresponding hatred of the emptiness of death that made him cling to life as he did. Indeed on one occasion at least he stated his position quite clearly. When Miss Seward remarked to him, "There is one mode of the fear of death which is certainly absurd: and that is the dread of annihilation, which is only a pleasing sleep without a dream,"' Johnson replied: "It is neither pleasing, nor sleep; it is nothing. Now mere existence is so much better than nothing, that one would rather exist even in pain, than not exist." At that moment Johnson was much nearer to Blake than were most of his contemporaries. Nevertheless Johnson's fixed opinion of life in general is typical of the more thoughtful members of his age.

"He used frequently to observe" (says Boswell), "that there was more to be endured than enjoyed, in the general condition of human life; and frequently quoted those lines of Dryden:

'Strange cozenage! None would live past years again,
Yet all hope pleasure from what still remain.'"

The whole passage in Dryden's *Aureng-zebe* is indeed an anticipation of Pope's remark upon which, as we have said, Johnson once enlarged:

"Man never *is*, but always *to be* blest."

Pope's lines were possibly suggested by Dryden's, which so closely resemble that philosophy of life widely held in the eighteenth century, that they will not be out of place here:

"When I consider life, 'tis all a cheat;
Yet, fooled with hope, men favour the deceit;
Trust on, and think to-morrow will repay:
To-morrow's falser than the former day;
Lies worse, and, while it says, we shall be blest
With some new joys, cuts off what we possest.
Strange cozenage! None would live past years again,
Yet all hope pleasure in what yet remain;
And, from the dregs of life, think to receive,
What the first sprightly running could not give.
I'm tired with waiting for this chemic gold,
Which fools us young, and beggars us when old."

There is the general mood of the eighteenth century. Reason, common sense could find little happiness in reality, could not, would not or dare not create it in imagination, and, admirable at least in this, refused to seek the refuge of any shallow optimism based upon pleasant illusions or sentimentality. To many the supreme virtue of the century lies in this spiritual courage. Perhaps it is the only age in England in which men dared to see life in its reality, without

shunning it; to stand and contemplate the problem it presented, without seeking in theology, philosophy or imagination any false but pleasing illusions that offer a way of escape. It may be that in rejecting a false and facile optimism, philosophical or theological, they also rejected consolation which was neither false nor facile; but at least we must respect them for their courage and sincerity.

As Johnson wrote in a letter to Bennet Langton:

"Whether to see life as it is, will give us much consolation I know not; but the consolation which is drawn from truth, if any there be, is solid and durable: that which may be derived from error, must be, like its original, fallacious and fugitive."

Throughout the earlier part of the century this spirit is everywhere found—in Pope and Swift, in Gray and Collins, in writers of poetry and of prose, until in Blake and Cowper a new note of hope is heard, though in Cowper that note is tremulous and uncertain, drowned often by the melancholy which was the toll exacted from many who dared bravely to face life's problem with no help but that of reason. When for a time in Cowper faith vanquishes reason, melancholy departs.

Of this quiet stoicism of the century many examples might be given, but I know of none better in prose than the magnificent close of Gibbon's *Autobiography*:

"The present is a fleeting moment, the past is no more; and our prospect of futurity is dark and doubtful. This day may possibly be my last: but the laws of probability, so true in general, so fallacious in particular, still allow about fifteen years. I shall soon enter into the period which, as the most agreeable

of his long life, was selected by the judgement and experience of the sage Fontenelle. His choice is approved by the eloquent historian of nature, who fixes our moral happiness to the mature season in which our passions are supposed to be calmed, our duties fulfilled, our ambition satisfied, our fame and fortune established on a solid basis. In private conversation, that great and amiable man added the weight of his own experience; and this autumnal felicity might be exemplified in the lives of Voltaire, Hume, and many other men of letters. I am far more inclined to embrace than to dispute this comfortable doctrine. I will not suppose any premature decay of the mind or body; but I must reluctantly observe that two causes, the abbreviation of time, and the failure of hope, will always tinge with a browner shade the evening of life."

There in choicest diction, polished, quiet, magnificent in its restraint, is that passionless despair of life which we find so general in the eighteenth century. Despair in that age has never more than a "still small voice." Its pessimists were too well-bred to scream as the romantics sometimes do, but their sincerity is not less real. Perhaps indeed, as we listen, there is more of intensity, of earnestness, of bitterness, in their quiet, low-pitched accents than in the shrill cries of their successors. They remind us of the French aristocrats of the Revolution, proceeding in dignity, with elegance, grace, unshakable self-control, to execution. They too are on a tumbril, but it goes more slowly, more silently, less spectacularly too, and they know not at what moment the blade of the guillotine will fall. Hope in that age was certainly suspect; as with Dryden, so with his immediate successors, the "chemic gold" was at a discount.

This is the spirit which occasionally finds expression in their shorter verses, as elsewhere.

Walter Harte, apparently struggling at the moment (despite all theories of reason) with an ill-fated passion, sees life in sombre hues, and expresses his feelings in

A Soliloquy Occasioned by the Chirping of a Grasshopper

Happy insect! ever blest
With a more than mortal rest,
Rosy dews the leaves among,
Humble joys and gentle song!
Wretched Poet! ever curst,
With a life of lives the worst,
Sad despondence, restless fears,
Endless jealousies and tears.

In the burning summer, thou
Warblest on the verdant bough,
Meditating cheerful play,
Mindless of the piercing ray;
Scorched in Cupid's fervours, I
Ever weep, and ever die.

Proud to gratify thy will,
Ready nature waits thee still:
Balmy wines to thee she pours,
Weeping through the dewy flowers:
Rich as those by Hebe given
To the thirsty sons of Heaven.

Yet alas! we both agree,
Miserable thou like me!
Each alike in youth rehearses
Gentle strains, and tender verses;

Ever wandering far from home;
Mindless of the days to come,
(Such as aged winter brings
Trembling on his icy wings)
Both alike at last we die;
Thou art starved and so am I!

A grasshopper also inspires Samuel Say in

AN EMBLEM OF THE SHORTNESS OF HUMAN PLEASURE. TO THE GRASSHOPPER

Little insect! that on high,
On a spine of springing grass,
Tipsy with the morning dew,
Free from care thy life dost pass:

So may'st thou, companion sole,
Please the lonely mower's ear,
And no treacherous winding snake
Glide beneath to work thee fear,

As in chirping plaintive notes
Thou the hasty sun doth chide,
And with murmuring music charm,
Summer, long with us t'abide.

If a pleasant day arrive,
Soon the pleasant day is gone:
While we reach to seize our joys,
Swift the wingèd bliss is flown.

Pains and sorrows dwell with us;
Pleasure scarce a moment reigns:
Thou thyself find'st summer short;
But the winter long remains.

But Samuel Say was a rebel against the tradition of his day, for we are informed in the preface to his poems that

" Mr Say did not make virtue to consist in stoical apathy, but had a heart susceptible to every tender, social, and human passion."

The Rev. Charles Jenner, like Harte and Say, moralises; in this case the stimulus is not a grasshopper, but a fish. In *The Angler and the Philosopher*, the aged philosopher ponders over the fish that has just been caught, and the poem concludes with the following stanzas :—

" Fate gives us line, we shift the scene,
And jocund traverse to and fro,
Pain, sickness still will intervene,
We feel the hook where'er we go.

If proudly we our schemes extend
And look beyond the present hour,
We find our straitened prospects end,
And own an over-ruling Power.

Awhile we sport, awhile lament,
Fate checks the line, and we are gone,
Dragged from our wonted Element
To distant climes, untried, unknown."

Jenner's tendency to philosophise about life is shown quite clearly in his verses. In the final stanza of a poem *To Patience* he sings :

" O may my soul direct her steps aright,
To find the path, to man so kindly given,
Through pleasures that allure, through pains that fright,
By patient steadiness to climb to Heaven."

He seeks in a *Sonnet to Stella* to balance the gain and loss of the negative, timid philosophy so popular

in his day, and to draw consolation for loss of pleasure in the avoidance of pain :

" From every pleasure we forgo
Some comfort's surely born.
Have they the rose? Why, maybe so!
But we escape the thorn!"

However, if we may trust his verses, he believed that although we may escape the thorn we cannot escape the hook. Hence his satisfaction with a life of negation must have been of a very modified kind.

The ever-present sense of life's evanescence enters the love verses of the age as it did Marvell's. With their forerunner, they might say :

" For at my back I always hear
Time's winged chariot hurrying near,
And yonder all before us lie
Deserts of vast eternity."

Henry Baker in his lines *To Flora* strikes this same note :

" Tell me, Flora, tell me, why,
Little Love, and Thou, and I,
Hasten not to yonder bower,
There secure the present hour?

Prythee, let us not delay
Seizing pleasure while we may :
Opportunity, now smiling,
Is uncertain, and beguiling ;
Who knows what may hap to-morrow,
Good, or evil, joy or sorrow?
Those are out of Fortune's power,
Who possess the lucky hour.

Come, my Flora, let us try,
Whether Love, and Thou, and I,
Cannot find a prudent way
Fully to enjoy the day:
See, my Flora, sure we may.
Folded in each other's arms,
Raptured with each other's charms,
Be thy snowy bosom pressed
To this panting, glowing breast:
O! My Charmer! let us prove
All the mysteries of love,
Each bestowing, each possessing,
Every wish, and every blessing.

Prythee, be not long denying,
Winged Time is ever flying:
Even now a moment's gone:
Death is always posting on:
While we foolishly delay,
He may snatch us both away.

Of all to come beyond the grave
We can no conception have,
Mortal optics cannot see
Into dark Eternity;
What is pleasure here, we know,
Love alone is truly so;
Let us hasten then to prove
All the smiling joys of love;
Never more perhaps may be
Another possibility.

And in whatsoever way,
Busy, idle, dull or gay,
Howsoe'er we life employ,
Be it full of grief or joy,
Whether young, or old, we die,
Lingering or suddenly,

Whether we neglect, or care,
Still the same must be our lot,
To go, and live, we know not where,
Be, and do, we know not what."

It would be interesting to know what effect this somewhat breathless philosophising had upon the reluctant Flora.

In *A Serious Reflection on Human Life* we find Baker expressing a yet more gloomy pessimism :

" How vain is Man ! how foolish are his ways !
How short, and yet how sorrowful, his days !
From life's first moment to its latest date,
A painful, careful, miserable state !
Languid as sunshine on a winter's day,
Its worthless joys, scarce tasted, haste away :
But grief, and labour, everlasting flow,
And make out one continued scene of woe."

That is only the opening passage, but it is sufficient. It is, however, interesting, as it appeared in the year preceding the publication of Dyer's *Grongar Hill*, and the lines,

" Languid as sunshine on a winter's day,
Its worthless joys, scarce tasted, haste away,"

bear a remarkably close resemblance to Dyer's :

" A little rule, a little sway,
A sunbeam in a winter's day,
Is all the proud and mighty have,
Between the cradle and the grave."

It is quite probably mere coincidence, and I do not press for any " influence " in these days when so much importance is often given to mere verbal parallels.

Mallet's little poem is one of the best of these love songs in which the shortness of life makes a darker background to the joys of passion:

"The smiling morn, the breathing spring,
Invite the tuneful birds to sing;
And while they warble from each spray,
Love melts the universal lay.
Let us, Amanda, timely wise,
Like them improve the hour that flies;
And in soft raptures waste the day,
Among the shades of Endermay!

For soon the winter of the year,
And age, life's winter, will appear:
At *this*, thy living bloom must fade;
As *that* will strip the verdant shade.
Our taste of pleasure then is o'er;
The feathered songsters love no more:
And when they droop, and we decay,
Adieu the shades of Endermay."

Henry Brooke paints life in gloomy colours:

"Wretched mortals, doomed to go
Through the vale of death and woe!
Let us travel sad and slow.

Care and sickness, toil and pain,
Here their restless vigils keep:
Sighs are all the winds that blow,
Tears are all the streams that flow!
Virtue hopes reward in vain—
The gentlest lot she can obtain,
Is but to sit and weep."

However, all are not so despairing. One anonymous poet takes a view the opposite of that just expressed:

"Riches chance may take or give;
Beauty lives a day, and dies;
Honour lulls us while we live;
Mirth's a cheat and pleasure flies.
Is there nothing worth our care,
Time, and chance, and death, our foes?
If our joys so fleeting are,
Are we only tied to woes?
Let bright virtue answer, No;
Her eternal powers prevail,
When honours, riches, cease to flow,
And beauty, mirth, and pleasure fail."

Thomas Fitzgerald has left us a poem in which reason shows the way to happiness, by limiting desire:

"No glory I covet, no riches I want,
Ambition is nothing to me,
The one thing I beg of kind Heaven to grant,
Is a mind independent and free.

With passion unruffled, untainted with pride,
By reason my life let me square;
The wants of my nature are cheaply supplied,
And the rest is but folly and care.

The blessings which providence freely has lent
I'll justly and gratefully prize,
Whilst sweet meditation and cheerful content
Shall make me both healthy and wise.

In the pleasures the great man's possessions display,
Unenvied, I'll challenge my part;
For every fair object my eyes can survey,
Contributes to gladden my heart.

How vainly through infinite trouble and strife
The many their labours employ!
Since all that is truly delightful in life
Is what all if they will may enjoy."

Sometimes, as the ballad influence increases with Percy's *Reliques* and similar productions, we find these poems of life are given a romantic setting, as in *The Contented Philosopher*, by the Rev. Peter Cunningham. In this poem we are told how when

> "Deep silence reigned, and dewy night
> Her silver vestment wore,"

the writer rose "to hail Reflection's hour" and wandered out into the country.

> "The breezy mount, the misty vale,
> Alternately I strayed;
> The Gothic spire, the lonely cell,
> My wandering eye surveyed."

His attention is caught by a gleam of light in the distance:

> "'Twas Sophron's grove, an aged sire,
> Who, versed in Wisdom's lore,
> Now tuned his consecrated lyre,
> To close the silent hour."

The poet visits him and receives a long, tedious and trite exhortation to seek happiness in thoughtful retirement. From the fact that

> "The plumy tribes unceasing roam,"

we learn:

> "Thus restless Nature loves to range,
> Through life's gay scenes to rove;
> Till Reason prompts the happier change
> To Contemplation's grove!

When Fortune smiled, when Pleasure wooed,
How indolently gay!
Life's transitory stream I viewed
Unheeded waste away.

The gay delusive dream once o'er,
Calm Reason's thoughts arise;
Obeyed the monitorial power
That whispered, 'Now be wise.'

This silent grove my search surveyed,
Where Peace displays her charms:
How free Contentment's humble shade
From Fortune's wild alarms.

Now free from each fantastic strife,
Untroubled and serene,
I wait the closing hour of life,
To leave its empty scene."

Fortunately, seeing signs of approaching dawn, the sage checks his rhapsody and goes to bed, leaving his listener sad at parting so soon, and longing to spend the remainder of life with the loquacious Sophron—for

" There studious thought would wear the day,
In each instructive page;
Or happier speed the hours away,
In converse with the Sage."

Such is the meeting of the old current with the new —reason with the romantic hermit! There are, too, poems on life of a somewhat different kind; poems, often written on a birthday, wedding-day anniversary or New Year's Eve, in which the writer surveys his own past life and moralises thereon. Such is the following by Isaac Hawkins Browne:—

On the Author's Birthday

Now six and thirty rapid years are fled
  Since I began, nor yet begin to live;
Painful reflection! to look back I dread,
  What hope, alas! can looking forward give?

Day urges day, and year succeeds to year,
  While hoary age steals unperceived along;
Summer is come, and yet no fruits appear,
  My joys a dream, my works an idle song.

Ah me! I fondly thought Apollo shone
  With beams propitious on my natal hour;
Fair was my morn, but now at highest noon
  Shades gather round, and clouds begin to lour.

"Yes, on thy natal hour," the God replies,
  "I shone propitious and the Muses smiled;
Blame not the Powers, they gave thee wings to rise,
  But earth thou lov'st, by low delights beguiled.

"Possessing wealth beyond a poet's lot,
  Thou the dull track of lucre hast preferred,
For contemplation formed and lofty thought,
  Thou meanly minglest with the vulgar herd.

"Oh! born for nobler ends, dare to be wise,
  'Tis not e'en now too late, assert thy claim;
Rugged the path that leads up to the skies,
  But the fair guerdon is immortal fame."

Yet all do not place their happiness in fame, virtue or contemplation. The Rev. William Thompson is a more demure Herrick, finding in social pleasure the happy life, as the following poem shows:

The Happy Life

A book, a friend, a song, a glass,
A chaste, yet laughter-loving lass,
To mortals various joys impart,
Inform the sense, and warm the heart.

Thrice happy, they who, careless, laid
Beneath a kind-embowering shade,
With rosy wreaths their temples crown:
In rosy wine their sorrows drown.

Meanwhile the Muses wake the lyre,
The Graces modest mirth inspire,
Good-natured humour, harmless wit:
Well-tempered joys, nor grave, nor light.

Let sacred Venus with her heir,
And dear Ianthe, too, be there.
Music and wine in concert move
With beauty, and refining love.

There Peace shall spread her dove-like wing,
And bid her olives round us spring.
There Truth shall reign, a sacred guest!
And Innocence, to crown the rest.

Begone, ambition, riches, toys,
And splendid cares, and guilty joys.—
Give me a book, a friend, a glass,
And a chaste, laughter-loving lass.

Ever and anon too in these poetic reflections on human life we find the characteristic caution of the reasonable eighteenth century finding expression.

Sir James Marriot is typical of his age when he writes an

Ode on Ambition

In vain heaven tempers life with sweet,
With flowers the way that leads us home bestrews,
If dupes to passion and deceit,
We drink the bitter and the rugged choose.

But than what greatness gives revere,
Not seek, too feeble to sustain.
Through dangerous rocks let others steer
And trust their vessels to the stormy main.

Happy, great master of his mind,
The man who, guided by Discretion's lore,
Still mindful of the flattering wind,
Quits not, with all his canvas spread, the shore.

George Bubb Dodington, afterwards Lord Melcombe, in the one deservedly famous poem he wrote, gave to this spirit a fine utterance. It was sent to his friend Young, the poet, in a letter dated La Trappe, 27th October 1761, the year before Lord Melcombe's own death, and contained the summary of a whole life's thought and experience:

"Love thy Country, wish it well,
Not with too intense a care,
'Tis enough that when it fell
Thou its ruin didst not share.

Envy's censure, Flattery's praise,
With unmoved Indifference, view;
Learn to tread Life's dangerous maze,
With unerring Virtue's clue.

Void of strong desires, and fear,
Life's wide ocean trust no more;
Strive thy little bark to steer,
With the tide, but near the shore.

Thus prepared, thy shortened sail
Shall, whene'er the winds encrease,
Seizing each propitious gale,
Waft thee to the Port of Peace.

Keep thy conscience from offence,
And tempestuous passions free,
So, when thou art called from hence,
Easy shall thy passage be;

Easy shall thy passage be,
Chearfull, thy allotted stay;
Short th'account twixt God and thee;
Hope shall meet thee, on the way;

Truth shall lead thee to the gate,
Mercy's self shall let thee in;
Where, its never-changing state,
Full perfection shall begin."

That is one of the finest expressions of its cautious philosophy tempered by a quiet hopefulness that the age produced.

Many things the literature of the eighteenth century tells us about Man and Life, for it was an intensely serious age on one side, just as it was intensely frivolous on the other. But of all its versified wisdom I will choose in conclusion only two examples. The first is by Robert Dodsley and is, in its incisive, realistic treatment of a common-sense idea, full of the spirit of the time:

"Man's a poor deluded bubble,
Wand'ring in a mist of lies,
Seeing false or seeing double,
Who would trust to such weak eyes?

Yet presuming on his senses,
On he goes most wondrous wise:
Doubts of truth, believes pretences,
Lost in error lives and dies."

That is probably the best thing that poor Dodsley ever wrote, and to it I shall join the best of the once famous Mrs Barbauld's verses which Wordsworth wished he had written. I do not mind if some learned critic discovers that they were written in the early nineteenth century—as indeed they almost certainly were—and blames me for including material beyond the limits of my title. I shall include them because I like them and think that they make a good ending:

"Life! I know not what thou art,
But know that thou and I must part;
And when, or how, or where we met,
I own to me's a secret yet.
. . . . . .
Life! we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;
Perhaps 'twill cost a sigh, a tear;
Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time;
Say not Good-night, but in some brighter clime
Bid me Good-morning."

With this quotation I close, for I have already lingered too long over these forgotten lyrics of the eighteenth century. Few of them possess high poetic merit; many bear the stamp of their author's mediocrity. I shall not quarrel with the reader who thinks them unworthy of resurrection to-day. But they who

care to spend a few hours of leisure in re-creating the spirit of a dead age, who love to trace in the markings of literary fragments the effects of great social, intellectual and emotional forces, as the geologist reads in the scratches on a pebble the record of vast geological epochs, these may find an occasional poem interesting, imaginatively stimulating perhaps, bringing to them glimpses of "old unhappy far-off things and battles long ago"; of departed happiness also, of dancing feet, and bright eyes, and fair faces in an antique dress; of wine-glad nights at assembly and ball. For as the shell retains its ocean murmur, so these forgotten verses of long-dead poets bear the muted music of a world now silent beneath the lightly scattered dust of Time.

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